CURRICULUM STOCKTAKE:
NATIONAL SCHOOL SAMPLING STUDY

CASE STUDIES OF SCHOOLS: IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL CURRICULUM

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March 2004
SUMMARY

This report outlines the findings of 23 case studies. The case studies were carried out to extend and enrich the findings of the survey studies in the research project Curriculum Stocktake: National School Sampling Study, which has been ongoing since 2001 (see p. vii). The case studies were conducted mostly in 2003 and involved interviews, observations and document analyses. Schools were chosen to approximately reflect the ratio of school types in New Zealand and covered a wide geographical area that included both North and South Islands. In selecting the schools, care was taken to avoid any which had been involved in the survey studies, and to ensure that recent Education Review Office Reports were indicative of curriculum implementation at the chosen schools being well regarded. That is, they were schools that had demonstrated effective implementation, but were continuing to face ongoing issues.

The interview questions, observations and document analyses were structured to investigate how the national curriculum had been implemented within each school. Case studies were written from audio-tapes and case notes, returned to each school for verification and then completed in an agreed format so that analysis across the entire sample could be completed. As a result, issues and themes across the schools were identified and form the basis of this report.

Analysis of the case study findings has largely confirmed the survey results reported in other milestones in this project. In general, teachers appeared positive about the national curriculum and have worked tirelessly to ensure that it has been implemented for the benefit of their students. In teachers’ endeavours to achieve this, all have had to work innovatively in implementing a range of school-wide systems, a process relying heavily on teamwork, albeit that the findings have elucidated considerable variation among schools in the way they have developed school and classroom programmes. The structure of the curriculum, in particular, its division into strands and levels, National Education Goals and National Administration Guidelines, and expectations about student achievement have had a pervasive effect on curriculum and assessment implementation. Considerable importance has been placed on understanding and interpreting the national curriculum documents, often through whole-school professional development with school schemes and plans to guide programmes and assessment having been developed in almost every one of the case study schools. Nevertheless, there were some signs of teacher resistance to changes they were not convinced about.

Case studies revealed common challenges in curriculum implementation, such as teacher overwork, a very full (even “overcrowded”) curriculum, and the need to streamline and use assessment results efficiently and effectively. They were evident across the entire sample. Some differences between secondary and primary schools were also evident.

**Primary schools**

While some issues were common for all schools, primary and secondary, others were more specific to primary schools. Across all the primary schools, curriculum leadership was central to the school’s organisation. In several, new leadership titles such as “director” or “manager” had been established. These curriculum leaders were responsible for leading teams in most curriculum areas. Nomenclature of subject matter had also shifted, English being called “literacy,” and mathematics, “numeracy.” Most schools had highly organised
systems for school-wide curriculum planning and assessment including student tracking and
the collection and aggregation of assessment results. Teachers were very positive about the
resources that the Ministry of Education and their school had provided to support
curriculum implementation.

However, there was also evidence of teachers striving to locate and modify resources, and
problems encountered with carrying out assessment and recording and reporting
assessment. Some teachers were critical of frequent changes to the reporting of student
achievement. In addition, there was a degree of uncertainty over how to cover some of the
curriculum content. Primary teachers explained that although there had been a refocusing
on literacy and numeracy, they still felt that they needed to cover the curriculum in a
balanced way. In all but a few cases, primary schools were structured to ensure each
curriculum area, including student achievement, was planned, implemented and evaluated
systematically. Since primary teachers usually taught across the entire curriculum, this
standardisation entailed increased meetings, policies, paperwork, and supervision.

Small, rural primary schools stood out as having their own identities based upon school
traditions, and in some respects, appeared in contrast with urban case study schools. Low
staff numbers, the fact that principals were also classroom teachers, and the need to meet
the same expectations as larger schools where work could be divided among more staff,
raised further issues of work intensification. However, on a more positive note, the rural
traditions and customs of such activities as agricultural events, calf club days, and the like,
have survived through incorporation within the broader curriculum.

There was also an impression gained by the researchers that the new national curriculum
had “settled down,” that teachers were now more familiar with the documents they used,
and that schools and departments had made a lot of headway in constructing plans that
linked national curriculum to classroom programmes.

One of the issues that became apparent during data collection which had an impact upon
both primary and secondary schools was that there were some reports of high student
turnover - in any one year - sometimes referred to as transience. High turnover, it was said,
impacted – sometimes severely – upon curriculum implementation. Teachers spoke of the
serious consequences of frequent changes of school. Students were affected by a reduced
continuity of study and reduced learning experiences. Carefully planned and sequenced
learning experiences were required for sustained learning that built upon previous learning.
For teachers, a frequently changing class of students meant that their goal of connected
learning was difficult – if not impossible – to achieve for all students.

Secondary schools
A number of issues impacted more specifically upon secondary schools, although there was
considerable commonality between primary and secondary. First, many secondary teachers
thought that effective curriculum implementation depended on an individual teacher’s
enthusiasm and commitment. These qualities were seen as critical to effective curriculum
implementation and, to a large degree, overcame organisational and other constraints. That
is, while a great deal of work has been done in schools to provide the facilities, resources
and plans, it was still the prerogative of the teacher in front of the class who ultimately, “put
it all together” to facilitate the particular lesson. School leaders valued teachers who
demonstrated the qualities mentioned – enthusiasm and commitment – and valued those
who used their own initiative and enterprise to make learning relevant and interesting for students.

One curriculum issue was the increasing trend towards dividing curriculum content into modules of learning. Some teachers argued that modules did not allow for the scaffolding of learning units (modules) required to accumulate long-term, connected, content understanding. This aspect of curriculum design was found in need of further investigation, to see whether units were being connected in logical ways by students. Another related finding with regard to modules highlighted by the research was that the module approach led to earlier specialisation (as early as Year 7 in some cases). There was also positive teacher reaction to modules, with some teachers seeing them as setting out clearly what was expected of students.

For secondary teachers, there was widespread concern over NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement), as teachers came to grips with what the changes were, and how they themselves [teachers] needed to change to respond to the shifts in NCEA. It should be remembered that as well as NCEA, each new curriculum statement has caused teachers to rethink their approaches. For example, secondary teachers also reported difficulties with fitting all the curriculum demands into a school’s existing organisation, including timetabling. There were also related curriculum issues, some of which have already been alluded to above.

Finally, professional development was seen as needing to focus on the curriculum needs of teachers. Teachers emphasised that professional development was crucial to teachers’ learning about a new curriculum statement and the methods to implement it.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research involving the degree of intricacy outlined in this project is only possible with the co-operation of teachers. The research team is very grateful to principals who agreed to the case study for their school being included in this research. The principals encouraged selected teachers to participate and were very open about giving the researchers access to school curriculum documents and plans. Thanks also to other curriculum leaders in the schools, again, for providing access to departments or syndicate plans and their willingness to discuss aspects of curriculum being studied, and to the numerous classroom teachers who willingly talked with researchers and welcomed them into their classrooms.

It is hoped that this generosity of time and participation has resulted in information about curriculum documentation in schools that will influence future curriculum policy to the benefit of teachers generally.
OTHER NATIONAL SCHOOL SAMPLING STUDY REPORTS

From the National School Sampling Study, the following publications are on the Ministry of Education website to-date: www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/nsss2


Curriculum stocktake: National school sampling study: Teachers’ experiences in curriculum implementation: general curriculum, the arts, and health and physical education, in press.
**Terminology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Accident Compensation Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANP</td>
<td>Advanced Numeracy Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOs</td>
<td>achievement objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>assistant principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>deputy principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENP</td>
<td>Early Numeracy Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERO</td>
<td>Education Review Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HETENZ</td>
<td>Home Economics and Technology Teachers Association of New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>head of department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAGS</td>
<td>National Administration Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCEA</td>
<td>National Certificate of Educational Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEMP</td>
<td>National Education Monitoring Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIE</td>
<td>Newspapers in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMPA</td>
<td>Numeracy Project Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZCF</td>
<td>New Zealand Curriculum Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZQA</td>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSH</td>
<td>Occupational Safety and Health Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMI</td>
<td>De Bono’s Plus Minus Interesting strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRETOS</td>
<td>Proof Reading Tests of Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBA</td>
<td>student-based assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TENZ</td>
<td>Teachers’ Education New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TORCH</td>
<td>Test of Reading Comprehension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Chapter One: Introduction

Background
This research report is one of the reports that make up the Curriculum Stocktake: National School Sampling Study. It describes a number of case studies of how different schools have gone about the implementation of the New Zealand national curriculum.

The sampling study was carried out over two years from 2001. It has involved three survey rounds in 10 percent of New Zealand schools, and case studies in a one percent sample. The survey rounds have been outlined in separate research reports, and to-date, some are listed at the front of this report. In the surveys, questionnaires were used to collect information from teachers about their experiences in implementing national curriculum statements, which have been produced since 1992. The three rounds covered the following:

2001: General, mathematics, and technology.
2002: English, languages, social sciences, and science.
2003: General, the arts, and health and physical education.

The case studies comprising this report were carried out to provide more detailed information that would supplement and extend the survey data. Case studies were used as a way of revealing some of the complexity inside schools as teachers and school leaders planned their programmes and taught their classes.

Case Studies
Educational case study is a prime strategy for developing educational theory that illuminates educational policy and enhances educational practice (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1988). Cohen and Manion (1989) observed that “present antipathy towards the statistical-experimental paradigm has created something of a boom industry in case studies” (p. 125) using a diverse range of techniques employed in the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. In qualitative studies:

Investigators use a case study design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. (Merriam, 1988, p. xii)

This section briefly summarises the use of case studies in educational research and describes how they were used in this study.

1. Case study method in educational research
In his reconstruction of the educational case study, Bassey (1999) defined the process as one in which critical enquiry is aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action. Specifically, he explained that an educational case study is a study of a singularity conducted in depth in natural settings. Its essential features are that sufficient data are collected for researchers to be able to explore significant features of the case and to put forward interpretations for what is observed. He explained that many researchers using case study methods were “concerned neither with social theory nor with evaluative judgement, but rather with the understanding of educational action. They are concerned to enrich the thinking and discourse of educators either by the development of
educational theory or by refinement of prudence through the systematics and reflective documentation of evidence” (1999, p. 28).

In his discussion about case study research, Bassey described three types of case studies: theory seeking and theory testing; story-telling and picture-drawing; and evaluative case studies. Theory-seeking and theory-testing case studies are studies of general issues. Story-telling and picture-drawing are “analytical accounts of educational events, projects, programmes or systems aimed at illuminating theory” (1999, p. 62), and evaluative case studies examine areas of education to assess whether they are valuable. Stake (1995) also defined the three types of case studies: the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study, and the collective case study. The intrinsic case seeks understanding of a specific case because it is of interest, similar to Bassey’s (1999) “story-telling and picture-drawing.” The instrumental case enables the researcher to gain greater understanding of an issue and collective case studies are a collation of different case studies (Stake, 1994, cited in Wellington, 2000, p. 92-93).

In expanding on the process of undertaking a case study, Bassey (1999) listed the seven stages:

1. Identifying the research as an issue, problem or hypothesis.
2. Asking research questions and drawing up ethical guidelines.
3. Collecting and storing data.
4. Generating and testing analytical statements.
5. Interpreting or explaining the analytical statements.
6. Deciding on the outcome and writing the case report.
7. Finishing and publishing.

2. **Techniques in case study research**

Interviews, observation, and reading documents are the three main methods of collecting data for case studies. Interviews can be grouped into three main types: structured, semi-structured, and open-ended. In interviews that are structured:

   The problem is defined by the interviewer before the interview... the questions are formulated ahead of time and the respondent is expected to answer in terms of the interviewer’s framework and definition of the problem. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 155)

In contrast, unstructured interviews have a non-standardised format and the interviewer is concerned to learn as much as possible about the individual viewpoint of the respondent. An unstructured interview stresses the interviewee’s definition of the problem or situation, encourages the interviewee to structure the account, and relies on the interviewee’s notions about what is relevant to the situation and what is not (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bassey (1999) noted that the advantage of tape-recording interviews was that it enabled a researcher to focus on the direction of the interview rather than its detail. Interviews can either be transcribed verbatim or paraphrased. A difficulty associated with interviews is that they can produce screeds of material, often irrelevant to the topic(s) being studied.

Observation includes participant and non-participant observation. The participant-observer immerses himself or herself in an environment or situation to try and make sense of it. There can be drawbacks in this method of data-gathering. For example, Adler and Adler
(1994) warned against the faking and observer effect. When people are observed (and interviewed) they can change their behaviour, doing and saying things that they normally would not (Ramsay, 1987). Using observations of classroom practice to check out interview data (Strachan, 1997) and continuing observations over a reasonably lengthy period of time (Wolcott, 1973) can both help to minimise these effects.

Records and documents are another source of relevant information for case study research. As Gipps et al., (1995) noted, teachers’ assessment knowledge is often tacit and difficult to access through interviews, but all teachers are required to keep assessment records in some form. Additionally, as Hakim (1993) pointed out, administrative records such as school records were used to record the development and implementation of decisions and activities that are central to their functions.

3. **Benefits and drawbacks of case studies**

Advantages of case study research were listed by Adelman et al. (1980, cited in Bassey, 1999, p. 23) as:

- Case study data, paradoxically, is “strong in reality” but difficult to organise.
- Case studies allow generalisations either about an instance or from an instance to a class.
- Case studies recognise the complexity and “embeddedness” of social truths.
- Case studies, considered as products, may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent interpretation...
- Case studies are a “step into action.” They begin in a world of action and contribute to it.
- Case studies present research or evaluation data in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research report, although this virtue is to some extent bought at the expense of their length.

According to Wellington (2000) case studies should be illustrative, illuminating/insightful, disseminable, accessible, attention-holding, strong on reality, vivid and of value in teaching. He also noted that case studies may not be generalisable, representative, typical, replicable or repeatable. (p. 97)

Case study research can provide in-depth understanding of a subject or issue but it can also be time-consuming. In addition, case studies cannot be used to make generalisations because they are often based on a singular case. Walker (1983, cited in Bassey, 1999) also listed other disadvantages of using case study methodology. He stated, “Case study can be an uncontrolled intervention in the lives of others, can give a distorted view of the world and can have a tendency to embalm practices which are actually always changing” (p. 35).

**National School Sampling Study case study methodology**

Case studies in this National School Sampling Study were used along the lines outlined by Bassey (1999) above, and employed all three techniques of interviews, observations, and document analysis. The aim was to describe and interpret the way curriculum had been implemented; and especially the degree of connection between national curriculum, school decisions, policies and practices at the levels of the school, faculties, departments, syndicates, and classrooms.

Twenty-three school case studies were completed. The schools were chosen to approximately reflect the ratio of school types in New Zealand, covering a wide
geographical area. To be included, a school had to be regarded as effective in curriculum implementation, as confirmed by Education Review Office Reports. The sample was:

- Primary contributing (Years 1-6): eight schools
- Full primary (Years 1-8): nine schools
- Intermediate (Years 7-8): two schools
- Secondary (Years 9-13): three schools
- Area school (Years 1-13): one school

A procedure for gathering data was developed by the research team, and several researchers trained to do the fieldwork in schools. Case studies that are reported resulted from data collection as follows:

1. An interview with the principal and/or the senior management in the school. The interviews covered broad curriculum goals for the students; the role of senior management in curriculum leadership; curriculum policies in the school (and their development); expectations of classroom programmes; and systems of review and accountability (see Appendix).

2. A study of school department, faculty, syndicate, and teacher documents on curriculum strategy and planning. Interviews usually included teachers from selected departments in secondary schools (with an interview with the head of department); selected primary syndicate leaders, and classroom teachers. They were asked about how national curriculum documents had been translated into department (or faculty) or syndicate plans, and how these related to classroom teaching. Issues like planning processes, resources, review and monitoring, assessment and support for teaching were discussed (see Appendix).

3. Selected classroom observations in some schools and interviews with those teachers. In the more detailed case studies, several teachers were interviewed and observed in the classroom. The aim was to explore connections between the national curriculum documents, school policies and plans, department/syndicate plans, and a teacher’s approach to planning and classroom teaching.

To reiterate: there were two kinds of case studies. First, there were fairly detailed studies that included classroom observations and teacher interviews. Second, some were less detailed and included few or no observations. The reason for including two types of case study was that within the project resourcing, it was not possible to carry out detailed studies in every school.

It should be noted that informed consent was gathered from each school before the research began (Appendix). A letter was also sent to the principal of each school, informing them of the research process and enclosing questions that would form the basis of the interviews so that the participants would be prepared for the visit from the researcher(s) (Appendix).
School case study sample: Overview of schools where teachers were involved in a case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>School Year of Students</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years 1-6</td>
<td>Years 1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- State</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrated</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- State</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Integrated</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sum              | 8          | 9          | 2          | 1          | 2          | 1          | 16    | 6     | 1     |
Chapter Two: Case Study Findings

As explained in Chapter One, the case study schools were selected to be representative of the proportions of different types of schools in New Zealand. Although 27 schools were originally selected, 23 schools were completed within time and budget constraints. However, as the table in Chapter One reveals that these 23 schools were spread in proportion to the national numbers of these types of schools and included suburban schools in cities, and schools in provincial towns and rural areas. In addition, they ranged over all deciles and included a diversity in terms of cultural and religious character. Schools studied were located in both North and South Islands.

In order to keep the identity of each school confidential, the case studies have been coded to reveal only their type. The coding is as follows:

- contributing primary schools have been coded CP
- full primary schools have been coded FP
- intermediate schools have been coded I
- secondary schools have been coded S
- area schools have been coded A
- integrated schools have an “i” included in their code.

The case studies are organised in the order listed above and their titles reflect the nature of the school. The reports of the schools follow, for the most part, a similar format as follows:

1.0 Description;
2.0 School systems;
2.1 Management structure: Curriculum;
2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum;
2.3 Documents: School plans;
2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies;
2.5 Assessment policy;
3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide;
3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes;
3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes;
3.3 Classroom plans and programmes;
4.0 Discussion of findings;
5.0 Summary

CP1: An urban contributing primary school

1.0 Description

This school was a large, decile 10, state, contributing (Years 1-6), primary school in a large city. The student population of 650+ students was made up of: 87% Pakeha; 1% Māori; 9% Asian; and 3% South African origin. Seventeen were foreign fee-paying students. This school has had considerable renovation in the last few years with further upgrades of the library, technology, music, and classroom facilities planned for completion in the near future. At the time of the study, there were 24 classrooms in operation at the school.
As indicated by the school’s motto and mission statement, the ethos was to provide programmes to assist students to develop and reach their potential. The principal explained that the national curriculum was regarded as the “launching pad” from which to achieve this goal. While there was a specific focus on literacy and numeracy (particularly in Years 1-4), the school encouraged development of potential across the whole curriculum, providing a breadth of opportunities that enhanced academic, sporting, cultural, and personal growth. The latest Education Review Office Report stated that children from this school were “confident and outgoing.” It mentioned that the children responded “positively to the variety of learning opportunities available,” and engaged “meaningfully in genuine interactions with staff members and each other.”

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

Five teachers were interviewed at this school. The senior management team consisted of the principal, deputy principal (DP), and assistant principal (AP). In addition to their management roles, the DP and AP had specific curriculum co-ordination roles – the DP being “director of student achievement,” and the AP “director of numeracy.” A senior teacher was “director of literacy,” and other teachers had responsibility for other curriculum areas. Each “director” and “lead” teacher had a group of teachers with interest and/or expertise in the area to assist them to prepare policies, schemes (an overall school curriculum plan), and long-term plans for the different curriculum areas. These curriculum groups met regularly, at least once a term but more often when there was a major initiative underway (such as the introduction of a new programme).

The teachers from each Year group in the school formed a team with a team leader. For example, the teachers teaching Year 5 students worked together in a team and one of the teachers had the role of team leader. Each of the Year groups was represented on each of the curriculum groups outlined above (at least for junior and senior areas of the school). Through these representatives, initiatives, information, policies, schemes, planning advice, and even classroom observation and feedback (in some cases, from the curriculum groups) was fed back to Year group teaching teams.

There was a school management meeting each week, which all teachers could attend if they wished. This group took care of organisational issues such as school organisation, timetable, and budgetary matters. The DP also led student assessment, teacher supervision, and attestation groups and processes.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

There was strong support for professional development across the curriculum. In fact, professional development was highlighted as a focus area for the Education Review Office (ERO) visit in 2002. The ERO report stated that the school climate was one that was conducive to improvement. In mathematics, for example, “varied and purposeful professional development … has led to a number of developments. Teachers have drafted a new scheme to specify content and guide curriculum delivery. They have a useful monitoring sheet to ensure that they meet curriculum requirements. They have an increased awareness about learning in mathematics and demonstrate this in their classroom practice” (ERO, 2002).
Interviews with team leaders and teachers indicated that the staff had opportunities to attend courses, to undertake academic qualifications, and to take part in conferences. Whole-school professional development also took place when necessary so that all teachers understood new initiatives. When appropriate, this school brought in outside consultants to provide professional development and information for parents about new developments. This meant a large cost to the school for professional development needs, a cost met by the Board of Trustees (BOT) in their desire to have well qualified and well informed teaching staff.

2.3 Documents: School plans
As stated above, scheme and long-term planning was carried out across the school through the curriculum group structure. The school had clear statements of learning and teaching programmes as set out by the National Administration Guidelines. These were in the form of learning and teaching statements devised for each curriculum area and contained within the school scheme. The documents were disseminated to staff in each of the Year group teams to guide their unit and lesson planning.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies
Curriculum groups had budgetary allocations that could be used for purchasing necessary resources. The school appeared to be very well provided for with resources noted across the curriculum. A busy, well stocked and staffed school library and a well organised resource room were in evidence as well as specialist music and art rooms. Policies for resourcing were made at a school-wide level through the curriculum groups.

2.5 Assessment policy
The collection of achievement information occurred in a systematic manner under the direction of the DP as “director of student achievement.” A school-wide plan for checking on student achievement had been developed at the school level and implemented through planning and reporting mechanisms such as student achievement meetings, management meetings, and at BOT retreats, set out as yearly calendar procedures with assessment expectations noted throughout the year. For example, in February, each teacher was expected to complete running records for reading with each child, Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) where appropriate, a Schonell spelling test, basic facts mathematics assessments for Year 3-6 students, and a handwriting sample from each student. As stated in the ERO report (2002) “teachers have opportunities within their teaching teams to examine data about their children and to identify implications for their teaching programmes.”

Student progress towards meeting targets set for school-wide achievement was determined through a variety of measures such as the Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs), Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning project (asTTle) testing, six-year-old diagnostic survey data, Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs), national exemplars, running records, Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR) tests, and Schonell spelling assessments. Targets for student achievement were set in mathematics and literacy. For example, for the mathematics statement, there was listed a set of achievement indicators stating that it was the aim of the school that “regardless of gender or ethnicity, at least 75% of children will have completed level 1 in each strand of mathematics by the end of Year 2, level 2 in each strand by the end of Year 4, and level 3 in each strand by the end of Year 6.”
The DP explained the lengths to which she went to analyse data from the PATs each year and I observed her returning analysed information about one class’s asTTle assessment to a Year 4 teacher. All staff interviewed described how they used assessment tools as indicators of both current performance and potential, underscoring this school’s focus on student achievement.

There was regular reporting to the Board of Trustees and parents about student achievement in a range of curriculum areas. The results of school-wide assessments were also used to make decisions about the need for new programmes. An example of this was the implementation of a new spelling programme (explained later in this report).

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

As explained above, plans were devised for each curriculum area. These documents were disseminated to staff in each of the Year group teams to guide their unit and lesson planning. In line with the National Administration Guidelines, emphasis was placed on literacy and numeracy, especially in Years 1-4. To this end, literacy and numeracy had a “director” to lead the area and there was a school structure, an assessment policy, and professional development for each. The other curriculum areas were co-ordinated by a lead teacher and a curriculum team who were responsible for school-wide planning and information about professional development opportunities. Examples of school-wide organisation of literacy and technology are set out below to indicate how school-wide curriculum organisation and planning occurred.

Example: Literacy throughout the school

A senior teacher in the school led the literacy team and was known as the “director of literacy.” She had qualifications in the literacy field, was a trained Reading Recovery teacher, a member of the local branch of the New Zealand Reading Association, and had attended Reading Association conferences in New Zealand for many years. Conversations with her demonstrated that she had up-to-date knowledge about the state of literacy in New Zealand schools and was concerned to ensure children at this school enjoyed the very best programmes possible. She was also responsible for ensuring children with special needs were catered for throughout the school. These two roles linked neatly to ensure literacy was a school priority. A school-wide plan for literacy was developed by the literacy team and approved by the rest of the staff.

I observed a literacy team meeting held after school on the first day of my visit. Seven teachers attended the meeting. Every level of the school was represented and the DP (as “director of student achievement,”) and the “director of literacy” led the meeting. The purpose was to move forward the agenda of implementing a new spelling programme throughout the school. There had already been a professional development programme for teachers and a parent information meeting held by an outside facilitator on this spelling programme. The school had decided to adopt this particular programme to address the spelling needs of children identified through gathering student achievement data. They were now at the stage of overcoming some concerns raised by teachers about the philosophy and implementation of the programme. A clear, written agenda had been prepared in advance of the meeting, as had relevant handouts from the English curriculum.
Throughout the meeting, issues about the philosophy, practice and implementation of the new programme were raised and discussed. Most of these issues had been gathered from the Year level teams by their representatives on the literacy group. Towards the end of the meeting, the DP summarised the issues that had been raised and indicated how a solution might be reached for each issue. These solutions included such strategies as: referring some matters to the management team for discussion (for example, cross-grouping classes for the spelling programme); visiting other nearby schools operating the programme; referring issues about testing to the assessment team; asking for further comment from teachers on one or two aspects; and confirming a further, final meeting of the literacy team for the last week in the term.

Example: Technology throughout the school
As with all curriculum areas, the technology team had been led by someone knowledgeable and positive about this area for the last few years. The school ensured that curriculum team leaders had ample opportunities for professional development, supporting them financially to attend conferences and to enrol in further qualifications. In technology, teaching teams were provided with a scheme to guide their selection of topics for units; however, the way they planned and implemented the curriculum was left to them to decide.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes
It seemed that mathematics and language were usually planned on a teacher-by-teacher or a Year group basis to meet the differentiated needs of the children in each class/Year group whereas other curriculum areas were more likely to be based on unit plans. These unit plans were often planned at only one level of the curriculum and often implemented through whole-class teaching. That said, however, one lead teacher did explain how, in technology, he encouraged a differentiated approach for his students within technology units, through a problem-solving approach.

Planning for units occurred across the school at the teaching team level in most instances. Based on the schemes and long-term plans prepared by the curriculum teams, each teaching team plans, teaches and assesses units at the level of the curriculum appropriate to that Year group level. However, as stated earlier, planning for literacy and numeracy tended to be undertaken by individual teachers based closely on children’s needs.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes
The teachers used the national curriculum documents, Ministry of Education handbooks, school schemes, and long-term plans to assist them in planning their detailed classroom programme. English and mathematics programmes were tailored to students’ needs and were, if necessary, pitched across several levels of the curriculum. The school used a set of mathematics books across the school as a text. These could be used flexibly to meet the needs of children but each Year group appeared to have just one level of the text. One teacher explained that having a text book for mathematics and a homework workbook “kept him accountable” as it reminded him of what children at that Year level should be able to do and mentioned that the parents of his students would be assisting them with the examples in the homework workbook. He viewed this positively, and believed that
teachers should be aware of the expectations for children at each Year level, and knowledgeable about how they were achieving.

Teachers also planned their own lessons from the units prepared within a teaching team. In this way, while they may have been working at achieving the same achievement objectives, each classroom was often studying a different topic. For example, in “the living world” in science, the achievement objectives may be to do with understanding life cycles. One class could be studying frogs while another was investigating butterflies. Teachers were expected to keep work plans, and these were checked from time to time. The following example is based upon a researcher’s fieldnotes:

Example: A literacy lesson
I observed a phonics lesson in a Year 0 (new entrant) classroom. The planning was derived from the school’s literacy scheme and was a regular feature of daily teaching at this level. It was a whole-class lesson in which the teacher used a range of common classroom objects to stimulate auditory and thinking skills. There was a range of difficulty in the oral tasks presented and it was obvious that the teacher knew who to target which level of question at.

This teacher told me that she saw the national curriculum as the children’s guarantee that they would have equitable opportunities to reach their potential. In fact, she believed strongly that children should not be promoted out of her class until they had had enough time there to cover the same length of programme as every other student. To some extent, this emanated from the teacher’s background in the UK school system where children all start school at the same time of the year in comparison with children in New Zealand starting on their fifth birthday. However, it was also linked to her desire to be accountable to each and every child and his/her family.

Accountability was a strong theme running through the conversations held with teachers at this school. Each teacher interviewed explained how he/she was accountable to the parents and their students, their colleagues, and to the Board of Trustees.

For example, the DP was analysing asTTle results for one classroom and shared these with the teacher at morning teatime. The teacher (unprompted) noticed how advanced some of the children in her class were in aspects of literacy and began exploring ideas for extending these children with the DP and principal. The analysis of PATs results was communicated to each classroom teacher for action and there was a school-wide homework policy with each child purchasing homework workbooks as part of their stationery requirements.

4.0 Discussion of findings
It would appear that there was a very strong linkage of curriculum throughout this school. The national curriculum underpinned all the schemes and plans but school and syndicate/Year group planning was a critical link in implementation. The curriculum groups, and their articulation to the Year group teams, appeared to facilitate school-wide programmes of instruction. This meant that teachers at this school were very clear about expected levels of achievement for their students across the curriculum.

Teacher knowledge and skill was supported by the strong curriculum team organisation throughout the school, the planning and assessment strategies, and the provision of professional development. The school was aware of and was using new assessment tools
(for example, asTTle, ARBs, NEMP, exemplars, etc), had analysed gaps in their students’ achievement (for example, spelling), and had sought suitable programmes and professional development programmes to address this need. At least two staff members were completing their Masters degrees, both of whom were at the dissertation stage. All stated that they were supported financially to achieve this extra study.

This was a very well resourced school. This meant that the children here were able to take advantage of opportunities for growth across and beyond the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy were given high priority in every child’s education, but children with special needs and abilities received extra attention where appropriate. Because it was a large school, responsibilities were clearly defined and school-wide policies were implemented for the benefit of all. While this might impinge at times on flexibility, this well organised institution made sure that all of its students had every opportunity to meet their potential.

There was emphasis on useful and pertinent documentation within the school. None of the teachers interviewed expressed concern about paperwork and, in fact, one explained that she thought there was significantly less paperwork required than in her previous teaching position in another school. Probably due to the fact that planning was structured by long-term plans in the school’s scheme, teachers were only required to plan for the specific needs of their students within these school/Year group plans and, therefore, were able to focus on how the needs of children within their class were being met. That said, however, there did appear to be some emphasis on planning at one level of the curriculum for each Year group level which appeared to underpin whole-class planning and teaching. For example, the phonics lesson observed was taught to the entire class, the mathematics textbooks and homework workbooks were all at the same level for the Year group, and the bulk of curriculum planning (apart from mathematics and literacy) was at one level of the curriculum for each Year group.

The teachers who took part in this research felt accountability acutely. All of the teachers interviewed raised this as an important aspect of their work. Rather than a negative aspect, accountability appeared to be accepted as integral to the successful functioning of the school. The principal explained that his main role was to ensure that the children were receiving the best possible education and achieving to the highest level possible for each of them. He was in constant communication with the Board of Trustees and parents. A weekly newsletter included achievement information. The DP, as director of student achievement, ensured that the school and teachers within it were focused on student achievement. She had a major role in the implementation of assessment, analysis of the results, and the co-ordination of improved programmes through the school-wide curriculum teams. Her commitment to this was demonstrated by her leadership role in implementing the new spelling programme. As stated above, teachers were also very aware of their responsibilities to ensure children were making progress across the curriculum and were vitally involved in assessment, analysis, and targeted teaching programmes.

5.0 Summary

- This large, urban primary school appeared to be very well organised in planning and implementing the curriculum. It was a school not overburdened with paperwork but did have a thick school scheme containing statements regarding learning and teaching germane to each area of the curriculum. To clarify, the
school had very thorough documentation, but attempted to avoid excessive paperwork for individual teachers.

- There was clear articulation between the national curriculum statements and the Year group structure of the school. Curriculum levels were securely embedded within this and appeared to form the currency by which learning and progress were assessed and reported.

- The national assessment tools (asTTle, ARBs and national exemplars) and new curriculum initiatives (such as the Early Numeracy Project) were being implemented within the school and used to assist teachers in assessing the learning needs of their students.

- Although there appeared a fairly structured approach to long-term planning, class levelling and student assessment, the achievement results (for example, the analysis of asTTle in one Year 4 classroom) indicated that students at this school were achieving well.

**CP2: A contributing primary school in a large town**

### 1.0 Description

This contributing (Year 1-6) primary school was a decile 1B state school situated in a large town. The last ERO report (2000) stated that the student population was around 272 students which was made up of 61% Māori; 11% Pakeha; 10% Khmer; 13% Pasifika; and 5% Other. However, during this 2002 case study, the principal mentioned that there had been some change in the number and ethnic composition of the school. “Our Māori/Pacific roll has dropped a little to around 50/55% Māori, and risen to about 15% Pacific Island.” The school now had around 50 “exile students,” predominately from Cambodia, and a “smattering of students from Somali, Iran, Iraq and the Middle East.” The principal also commented that this year, the school had 12 international students, predominately from Taiwan and Korea. The inclusion of international, fee-paying students was a deliberate move by the school to help boost their finances which had been affected when the school’s decile rating went from a 1A to a 1B. This will be an ongoing arrangement in the school. The school was staffed by approximately 40 people which included about 15 class teachers; two Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs); a physiotherapist; special needs teachers who were part of a unit on the school grounds and a large number of support staff (at least six) working with children with special needs.

The school was divided into two main areas, junior and senior with the “middle” (Years 3-4) being included with the senior syndicate. There were also three bilingual (Māori-English) classes, one in each area of the school who worked as “a loose group on their own but were very much part of the syndicates too.” Interestingly, the principal stated that numbers in the bilingual classes were declining and she reflected that this may be the result of “the very good mainstream programmes being offered in the school.”

The last ERO report acknowledged the diversity of the school population and congratulated the principal, senior management and teachers on the high quality of learning and teaching opportunities they were providing for students at the school. The principal’s goal for her children was to be able “to function effectively in the community with the skills when they leave here to be good, upstanding citizens. We acknowledge that we are starting on the
back foot with some of our children but we believe it is possible, that’s why we have such an emphasis on the basics, numeracy and literacy.” The importance of starting with high expectations (social and academic) of all children from the time they entered the school was stressed in all the interviews with senior management and staff. The principal explained:

*We believe very strongly that when children walk in the gate they leave all the rubbish behind them. We say, “You come to school to learn and to work with people who love you and respect you and will look after you and expect good things from you.” That’s the key to success.*

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management team consisted of the principal, deputy principal (DP), and two lead teachers, one in the senior and one in the junior school. These two teachers shared the management units for the assistant principal (AP) position. The DP and lead teachers had only been in these roles for a short time so were still “finding their way.” The principal explained that her role in curriculum within the school was minimal now as she had delegated much of that responsibility to her DP and lead teachers. She felt that the complexity of her role as principal meant that she was unable to:

*We* do everything... principals tend to get so wound up in the day-to-day management that we need to know there is someone else who can take on the job of curriculum and assessment policies and practices within the school ... I do want to have a handle on what is happening in these areas and I talk a lot to my teachers.

She also stressed that she felt it important and wanted to provide leadership opportunities for her staff, “I believe the control has to be with the people who are doing the job. The lead teachers and the classroom teachers are the people who have the experience, they are up-to-date with the curriculum, my job is to support them in this and provide guidance where I can.”

The DP, responsible for the overall management of curriculum and assessment delivery within the school, was supported by the two lead teachers in developing and reviewing curriculum policies. It appeared that there was considerable review of all areas of the curriculum and assessment policy and practice occurring as the DP came to grips with her new role and consulted with staff. The two lead teachers also had responsibility for some curriculum areas. One system that was changing involved the Curriculum Clusters, where one teacher was responsible for a curriculum area including budget and resources. However, one of the lead teachers mentioned that this system had now changed with “people sharing input, and no one person is responsible for buying things or saying everyone has to do something, everyone has a say.” Curriculum policies were also being reviewed or rewritten, usually, first by the DP and lead teachers, then with people interested in the particular curriculum area, and finally, with teachers at staff meetings. One of the lead teachers explained that he became a co-ordinator of several curriculum areas either through his interest and/or expertise in the area or from being asked by management to take on that role. He saw his role in leading a curriculum area as a “team effort” where others who were interested helped him, provided support in professional development and finding and providing resources.
The principal and senior management generally met once a week and issues or developments relating to curriculum policy and/or practice were then discussed. All new developments and initiatives were discussed with staff before implementation.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

There was a strong support for professional development (PD) in the school. The management team valued their own also, and had attended a number of workshops and courses. Interviews with team leaders and teachers indicated that there were opportunities to attend PD courses. There was a link from PD to the performance appraisal system in the school with teachers setting personal professional development goals during appraisal interviews. The DP and lead teachers were responsible for initial observations and interviews, and all staff then had an interview with the principal to discuss their future goals and aspirations. Each teacher had a PD budget. The school was also involved in Ministry of Education (MOE) PD contracts which were generally whole-school foci. Staff who were interested or responsible for an area went to the courses and were expected to share what they had learned during staff meetings. The school was currently involved in the Early Numeracy Project (ENP) and Advanced Numeracy Project (ANP) mathematics initiatives. Those types of PD meant that costs for the school were lessened with support from the Ministry. The school brought in outside consultants when required and had made much use of advisers to schools, in particular.

2.3 Documents: School plans

As stated earlier, school policies and plans appeared to be largely under review as the new management began to critically evaluate current systems and procedures. It appeared that curriculum planning did link to the school’s overall strategic plan and vision and the National Administration Guidelines. ERO stated that: “With the establishment of a comprehensive long-term strategic plan the school is well placed to move forward to address the requirements of the National Administration Guidelines.” There was a generic curriculum delivery policy along with implementation plans for each curriculum area. There were also guidelines for implementation for each of the seven essential learning areas. Those documents were disseminated to all staff to guide their unit and lesson planning. The principal mentioned that she was currently considering going back to separate curriculum policies rather than one generic one, particularly in mathematics and English:

I think that with so much emphasis on numeracy and literacy now we probably need to be more specific in what we are saying and what we expect...a tighter control maybe over the direction. I think we are moving towards a separate mathematics and English policy with pretty structured guidelines and implementation requirements that are not negotiable, even down to how to deliver and for how long.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

It would appear that responsibility for curriculum budgets was a role shared amongst those staff involved in each curriculum area. Policies for resourcing were made at a school-wide level through consultation with management and curriculum leaders or groups of interested people and staff. Management and staff interviewed generally felt that the school was well resourced. Teachers made good use of MOE documents and supplementary material and generally acknowledged the amount of support now coming from the MOE. The need for more “relevant” material for Māori was mentioned as, in some areas, it was felt teachers...
were left to “create their own resources in order to meet the children’s needs.” Teachers now used online resources such as Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) more often to help with planning ideas. ERO (2000) stated: “Resources give appropriate support to teaching and learning…Student learning and interest are heightened with the use of relevant and quality resources.”

2.5 Assessment policy

The collection of school-wide assessment information seemed to have occurred in a systematic manner under the direction of the DP and team leaders. ERO highlighted the effectiveness of the documentation and measurement of student achievement. They further acknowledged the amount of detailed information available on the learning status and progress of individual students through individual student profiles. They noted, “All implementation plans state the school’s expectations for student achievement at the end of Years 2, 4 and 6.”

School-wide achievement was collected and analysed through nationally-named assessment tools such as: Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs); School Entry Assessment (SEA) tests; Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR) test; and the Record of Oral Language. Much of the school-wide achievement data has been collected and analysed through a computer programme, which has meant the information is easily accessible to senior management and staff. The main focus has been assessment information in the areas of numeracy and literacy but information is being collected and collated for other curriculum areas and all data used in future planning, resourcing, and programming. The DP, currently evaluating the assessment guidelines for both school-wide and classroom assessment, explained:

> I’m changing not so much “what” we assess, but “how” it is being assessed and “how much” [it] is assessed...so at the moment we are all in a state of flux...I want to take the pressure off teachers so that they can get on and deliver the curriculum passionately, targeting children’s learning aimed at the right level for each child, not just this “blanket coverage” stuff.

Tracking sheets were used in each curriculum area to help ensure a balanced coverage of the curriculum. Teachers were required to keep these up-to-date as well as the fact that they were, “a checker to make sure they are not repeating topics or objectives over the years.”

The DP and lead teachers were responsible for ensuring that school assessment policies and procedures were undertaken at the classroom level. One of the lead teachers explained that this was done in two ways: formally though the collection of planning and assessment folders once a term and through monitoring of the children’s portfolios; and second, informally through team discussion meetings and the sharing of planning and assessment in addition to classrooms visits and observations by the management team. The principal and DP reported to the Board of Trustees and parents about student achievement in a range of curriculum areas.
3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

This has been described and been largely covered in the previous section. The school had implementation plans and guidelines for each curriculum area, which fed into the classroom unit and lesson planning. A school-wide focus on numeracy and literacy meant that much of the school’s resources and professional development was targeted to these areas. There was currently much review and change occurring in curriculum policy, programming and practice within the school, with the DP and lead teachers spearheading much of this critical reflection. A yearly overview was prepared in draft form by the senior management team and presented to the staff for their input. A major curriculum focus for each year was decided at the end of each year. This also included the school-wide assessment requirements so that teachers were aware when everything was due and had a say in organising this.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

As stated earlier, there were two main syndicates within the school, junior and senior. The lead teachers were responsible for these two groups. Unit planning was generally done in teams from the yearly overview sheet. Each team then decided on the key foci within each curriculum area. For instance: in social studies it may have been that in term one the requirement was to cover the *Culture and Heritage* strand so the team planned around that, coming up with the theme. The same was done for the other curriculum areas. English and mathematics planning was generally undertaken by each classroom teacher separately in order to meet particular needs of the students in their classrooms. Each team member then took responsibility for planning one curriculum area for the term for the rest of the group. This happened at the end of each term ready for the next. Once the planning had been completed, each team member shared their unit with everyone, explaining the key ideas and talking about resources which may be needed. Specific learning outcomes were also suggested with individual teachers altering these to suit the needs of their children. This was explained as a valuable system for, “Compacting planning time around the seven curriculum areas so that more time can be spent on teaching.” Lesson planning from these units was then left up to the individual teacher to develop. Each lead teacher had one day a week out of the classroom to support teachers in their team. They may visit classrooms or support through curriculum areas they were responsible for such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) help and support in classroom programming. This time also allowed them to observe what was happening in classrooms and to check that school policies were being implemented.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

The teachers interviewed all stated that they used the national curriculum statements to guide their planning. One teacher explained that because of the nature of the school, mathematics and English were the key areas for teaching and learning, “So many of our children enter this school with so few skills in these areas, we need to make up for lost time in order that they are able to keep up with the national expectations of children of their age.” The importance of the essential skills was also highlighted by all those interviewed. There was a focus on self-management and communication skills in particular, in teacher planning and programming. English and mathematics programmes were tailored to suit the needs of students at each Year level. Weekly and daily lessons were prepared from the unit
plans by individual teachers. School assessment procedures appeared to be adhered to in classroom practices.

*Example: A language lesson in the junior school*

The session began with the whole class sitting in a circle going through the procedure of making toast. The children were asked to contribute ideas at each stage of the process. The teacher wrote the children’s ideas up as instructions for making toast. She used the children’s words as much as possible. When the toast was cooked the children left the mat to write the instructions down in their books. A student teacher took a group of children having difficulty with this process to help them understand what was expected of them.

The teacher explained later that this session was at the beginning of the procedural writing unit. Each term the school focused on a different writing form in English, exposing them to a variety of genres over the course of the year. She said they would continue to experience different examples of procedures with as many “hands-on” activities as possible, and her instructional reading resources reinforced procedural writing, “in the hope that the books will help with their comprehension as well as make the unit more meaningful.”

Unit planning was largely done co-operatively within her syndicate. Assessment practices in this class followed the school systems mentioned earlier. The teacher used formative strategies to gain an understanding of the children’s knowledge in a curriculum area and some summative testing, particularly for the purposes of school-wide data collection. Portfolios were used as a repository for student’s work. However, it had been explained earlier by the DP that the portfolio system was on her “to review” list, as she currently was unsure as to their effectiveness as an assessment and reporting tool.

### 4.0 Discussion of findings

It appeared that this school had a number of curriculum policies and practices which were currently under review. However, the last ERO report was very positive about systems and procedures that were in place at that time. It may be that the current push for change was part of the natural process of strategic planning and review; it could also be linked to the new management personnel who were bringing their own ideas and expertise to their positions.

School-wide policies seemed to be linked to the school’s strategic plan, the *National Administration Guidelines* (NAGs), the national curriculum documents, and *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (NZCF). Staff interviewed appeared to be aware of school policies and procedures and took these into consideration when planning and assessing. There was an emphasis on team planning through syndicates for units of work. Each member took responsibility for a curriculum area to plan for the rest of the team each term. The reasoning behind this planning system seemed to be largely related to saving time so “teachers can teach more and plan less.” A question about whether this type of planning led to a “one size fits all” programme might be asked. However, one of the lead teachers felt that the system still allowed for teacher individuality and flexibility in being able to change or alter what had been planned by a colleague.

Classroom teachers used the curriculum documents and supplementary resources to help with their unit and lesson planning. The school emphasis on numeracy and literacy was reflected in classroom programmes and assessment practices. The DP and principal were
considering implementing more specific policies and guidelines in these two areas to ensure coverage and standardisation of curriculum delivery.

The principal had devolved responsibility for curriculum and assessment to the DP and her lead teachers. She believed strongly in empowering her staff through providing leadership opportunities, she was also realistic as to what she was able to do in such a busy, diverse school. The DP was new in the role and was still in the process of grappling with her many roles. One of the lead teachers had only four years of teaching experience and was also finding his way. Both leaders had a desire to create a supportive environment for staff to work and grow professionally.

Professional development was valued in the school. Whole school development was undertaken often in the form of MOE contracts and individual teachers had budgets for their own personal development goals. Individual professional development was linked to the performance appraisal system within the school. Outside “experts” were used often in the school, in particular the advice and guidance provided by school advisers. The Ministry of Education Early Numeracy Project and Advanced Numeracy Project mathematics programmes were currently being introduced to the school and had meant that considerable professional development and resource development was required.

The school was generally well resourced, but there was always need for more funding. The principal explained that with the new decile rating (from 1A to 1B) the school had lost a considerable amount of money. She said that she had previously used the money to provide extra teachers to lower teacher-student ratios in junior classes in particular and to buy resources to help her teachers implement the curriculum more effectively. The new building renovations and landscaping that had recently been undertaken were important, according to the principal, “to send out a message to the children, teachers, and community that the school was a good and safe place to work and learn.”

5.0 Summary

- Established systems and procedures for curriculum management and delivery were currently being reviewed and altered. Some new procedures were being developed by the DP.
- Two of the senior management team were new in the position and still finding their way.
- The DP and two lead teachers had responsibilities in school management of curriculum and assessment as well as curriculum co-ordination roles. They reported to the principal who kept the Board of Trustees informed about curriculum and assessment achievement and initiatives in the school.
- Positive ERO reports highlighted the link between the national curriculum requirements and the school policy and practice.
- Teachers generally supported the systems in place for curriculum and assessment management and delivery.
- There was a growing “team culture” developing which was related to many of the new policies and procedures put in place by the senior management team.
• There were established systems for the collection and analysis of school-wide achievement information which informed future planning, programming, professional development and resourcing.

• Syndicate planning was co-operative with teachers within each syndicate taking responsibility for a curriculum area to plan for the rest of the team.

• Teachers used the curriculum documents and supplementary resources to help them in planning. Online resources such as Te Kete Ipurangi were used also.

• Professional development was linked to the school’s performance appraisal system. The DP and lead teachers were responsible for teacher appraisals and goal setting. The principal interviewed all staff about their goals and approved their goals for professional development for the year. Each teacher had a professional development budget.

• Outside expertise was used by the school to help in their planning and school development. The school has been involved in a number of Ministry of Education professional development contracts.

• The school was well resourced but had begun to accept fee-paying students in order to make up for a financial short-fall which occurred after a change of decile rating.

• The school emphasised the need for programmes to help their students become “good citizens and role models for others.” There was a large focus on building self-esteem through positive learning conditions and high expectations.

CP3: A large suburban contributing primary school

1.0 Description

This contributing (Year 1-6) decile 5 school was in the suburbs of a large city. The student population of 500+ students was made up of 80% Pakeha; 15% Māori; 2% Pasifika; and 3% Other ethnicities. The school had only been open for several years and had experienced considerable roll growth in that time. The school environment was attractive with modern construction and layout of buildings. The latest ERO report in 2002 stated that, “Classroom environments are vibrant, attractive, print-rich and highly supportive of learning programmes.” The deputy principal (DP) mentioned that some comments had been made about the school’s outward appearance resembling an “up-market rest home or hotel.” There was a big emphasis on ICT in the school and it was noted that a partnership with a computer company provided valuable resources and opportunities to share the school’s expertise with others through a company scheme. People from other schools and others interested in education spend time in the school experiencing the integration of ICT into classroom programmes. This required both senior management and staff to articulate what they were doing at the school and classroom level and why. This may well be the reason why interview discussions clearly showed a depth of critical reflection and critique about school policies and practices.

ERO further mentioned that the school had developed an educational philosophy that focused on empowering students to take responsibility for their learning and to be involved with their learning. This philosophy was one which senior management stressed was vital for staff development also. The importance of promoting teacher empowerment and collaboration in any change process was a key factor in the policy and practice within the
school. Interestingly, the DP noted similarities between teacher and student learning needs when reflecting on the professional development processes and strategies within the school. He stated, “I think that the staff aren’t even aware that the process we are taking them through is the same process that we are doing with the kids. The whole exploratory, inquiry-based learning cycle is just as important for them to experience and understand as it is the kids.” In their report, ERO recognised the principal as a strong educational leader who had developed a collaborative framework from which senior management and others were empowered to take on leadership roles.

There were 23 full-time teachers, plus a number of part-time teachers. While there was a particular focus on numeracy and literacy, particularly in Years 1-4, the DP explained that, “Creating the most powerful learning we can for the kids and providing the most powerful framework for teachers to teach,” was the ultimate goal of senior management. This was achieved through a focus on integration of the curriculum into “big idea” themes throughout the school year. Strategies and techniques such as De Bono’s six thinking hats, Gardner’s multiple intelligences, and higher order and creative thinking approaches were also widely implemented into classroom programmes. The National Administration Guidelines and the national curriculum documents were seen as the “stepping stones” from which the learning experiences for students were developed.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management structure consisted of the principal and a non-teaching DP. Other management roles were allotted to team leaders and curriculum leaders. There were four Year-level teams within the school, which were managed by a team leader. The principal and the DP played a large role in the development of the curriculum policy and practice in the school. They frequently spearheaded an idea or change but then opened it up for discussion and debate amongst the curriculum leaders and staff. Curriculum decision-making about policy and practice, then, was a collaborative process with the staff and where appropriate, the school community. Policies were generally developed by senior management and discussed by appropriate curriculum teams before being presented to staff. The Board of Trustees also had an active interest in curriculum implementation and was highly supportive of staff initiatives and development. The latest ERO report highlighted the board’s close working relationship with senior managers and their support in the development and maintenance of the school’s vision.

The school had curriculum leaders for each discipline. These people had responsibility for curriculum development including policies, planning advice and professional development, budgets and resources. There were other team members, one representative from each Year level in each curriculum group. People chose to be involved in these areas usually because of interest and expertise in a particular curriculum. Sharing expertise was a feature in the school, with staff peer teaching or helping out in other teams to develop school-wide thematic foci. Curriculum team leaders had responsibility for staff meetings when new initiatives or organisational matters arose. They worked closely with the principal and DP on all curriculum issues. The school also had a group which had responsibility for much of the pre-planning and brainstorming of the current school focus. For instance, when the school was looking at reviewing its vision, this group helped to put staff ideas into a cohesive structure which then went back to staff for further consultation until the model they all agreed upon was created.
Regular management and team meetings were held. Curriculum meetings seemed to occur on an “as needed” basis. For instance, as the school had been involved in the new Early Numeracy Project and Advanced Numeracy Project mathematics programmes, the leaders for these areas had been having frequent meetings with their curriculum team and staff to help them “bed-in” the new systems.

In discussion with the principal and DP, they mentioned that as part of their ongoing reflection and review and emphasis on curriculum integration, the need for separate curriculum teams was being questioned. The DP stated:

_We are thinking that the way we implement the curriculum now, was not necessarily through individual curriculum teams and separate curriculum disciplines. So the question arises as to whether we need these individual teams and separate budgets or whether what we now need is an integrated curriculum team with a budget based on the needs of the school at the time._

It was intended that this idea would be further developed in the following year and once again, decided only after full staff consultation.

### 2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

As mentioned already, there was a very strong emphasis on and support for professional development within the school. ERO highlighted the high levels of commitment of board, staff and the school community on what they referred to as, “Focused professional development, and professional dialogue.” Throughout the interviews conducted at the school, professional development involving the need for critical reflection and review in order to improve teaching practice was stressed. The senior management and staff all appeared driven by the desire to create an environment for their students and themselves where children experienced deep learning rather than surface coverage of the curriculum within relevant, meaningful contexts.

There was a focus on school-wide professional development and as has been noted previously, much of this work has centred around creating and developing the school vision and the implementation of this concept.

Personal, professional development needs were identified through the school appraisal systems. Each teacher had an appraisal booklet which had a section for professional goals. These were identified and discussed with the appraiser. The senior management then approved the teacher’s request for assistance in the specified area. The Board of Trustees was very supportive of teacher development and had provided financial assistance for whole school release days for this purpose as well as financial assistance for the principal and DP to attend conferences nationally and overseas. The school was frequently asked to present at conferences and the senior management saw this as a form of PD for them because it required them to be able to critically reflect on their practice and then articulate it so others would understand.

The school used outside consultants to help with their professional development needs. An overseas consultant was hired to help with the development of the school vision, and school advisers and others had also been contracted to advise teachers in particular curriculum areas.
Professional reading was another feature of the PD process within the school. The principal stated that she read widely around educational ideas and issues and believed that part of her role was to pass this information on to her staff to discuss, reflect on, and debate. She frequently passed on articles to her DP and to staff when relevant information presented itself. From interviews, it appeared that many of the staff were very up-to-date with many of the current educational ideas and debates gleaned from their own reading, and from attending PD workshops and conferences.

This was a group of people who, in teaching at this school, took their professional development seriously and with great commitment. For example, during the time of the interviews a number of staff were either away at PD courses, had just been to some, or were attending workshops in the weekend. The information gained from these workshops and courses and was fed back to the staff through curriculum teams or through staff meetings.

2.3 Documents: School plans

School planning and organisation was well structured and presented coherently. There was a curriculum implementation plan booklet housing policies, planning, assessment and implementation procedures. All staff had access to all these documents through this booklet. There were clear statements concerning learning and teaching and curriculum linked to the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). The DP mentioned that the school’s “Curriculum Delivery Policy” was developed from the NAGs with reference to The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF), the national curriculum statements, the school charter, and the Treaty of Waitangi. A curriculum implementation overview and organisational statement gave a “big picture” overview of how curriculum was managed within the school. Here, the NAGs were linked to the school curriculum delivery policy and the curriculum implementation plans. How these were then implemented into classroom programmes was described. This was a clear representation of the curriculum processes within the school. A further document presented the “key focus areas” and provided a translation of how the framework described in the “overview statement” was implemented. Numeracy and literacy were a focus each term; the integrated curriculum which covered science, technology, and social studies had specific foci each term; and the arts, Māori, and physical education and health had some specialist units and were also integrated into “big idea” topics or themes when applicable. On this sheet, there was also an “estimated guide to weekly programmes.” This was developed by the principal and DP and provided teachers with guidelines as to how much time to spend on each area, each week. The suggestion was that teachers plan for seven hours and 30 minutes per week in English, five hours for mathematics, six hours for integrated curricula units, and four hours for specialist units. Emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the Years 1-4 was stressed. The reasoning behind these guidelines was explained by the DP:

*With an emphasis on integration we wanted to ensure that the key areas of numeracy and literacy were not being neglected, particularly in Years 1-4. We wanted to make the point to teachers that if we are going to balance our time, as it states we must in the NAGs, while promoting integration, we need to show that our practice is meeting up with our principles. So we need to think through the whole time issue, so we need to cover this and this and realistically there is only this much time, how best can we do it? Always asking the question of ourselves, is this the most powerful learning for our kids?*
At the bottom of this sheet a quote from *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF)* helped to support this practice, “by organising their programmes around subjects, or by an integrated approach, schools have the flexibility to plan to meet their particular needs” (p. 8). Also in the booklet was a sheet, “linking and interpreting the *National Administration Guidelines*,” with the revised NAG 1 set out for teachers’ information. A statement at the bottom of the sheet discussed the need for each school to make informed decisions about balancing the curriculum. “Beyond literacy and numeracy, the Ministry considers the balance of essential learning areas and essential skills is a matter for each school to determine within the framework provided by the national curriculum statements.”

There were also organisational and overview statements included in this booklet about integrated curriculum and ICT. These provided background information about the development of these areas, as well as vision statements and goals. How these goals were implemented was explained. Implementation plans were also incorporated into the booklet for each curriculum area. Each followed the same format with a focus for learners statement to introduce the plan, then a programme for learning statement which gave the aims and objectives of the plan, and a general statement about assessment and monitoring being included that linked back to the procedures laid down in the school’s assessment and evaluation policy and planning (discussed later in this report). School organisation was the next heading and indicated that there was a resource team leading each curriculum area. The budget was the next section, with a general statement about what it included but no mention of the amount of money in each area as this varied from year to year. Resources for each area were noted with a general explanation of the procedures for accessing resources in each area and which team was responsible for maintaining the resources. A reference section was included with both hard copy and electronic sources being suggested. Appendices at the back of the booklet included copies of a mathematics strand coverage sheet for school-wide implementation as well as a fostering student achievement statement which linked to the NZCF, the national curriculum statements, the school charter and the implementation plans. This statement introduced the principles for the direction of the curriculum that the school desired and acknowledged the importance of both the curriculum and the essential skills and the interrelationship between the two. Finally, an integrated theme overview sheet was included which set out themes for the year, the curriculum focus and strands, the concepts and understandings from the achievement objectives which were to be taught, and the rationale or purpose for each integrated study topic. This acted as the long-term plan for each team; the team then planned within that broad topic for their particular level or class. Long-term planning was generally undertaken collaboratively within each team but teachers were free to plan individually if they chose for their own particular class.

**2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies**

As stated earlier, curriculum teams had budgetary responsibilities and these were planned for within the team, based on the perceived needs of each curriculum area. These frequently varied from year to year depending on the school-wide emphasis for a particular curriculum area, which may require greater resource money for that period. These needs were discussed with the principal and the DP and decisions were then made and presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. For instance, at the time of the interviews, the school was deeply involved in introducing both the Early Numeracy Project and Advanced Numeracy Project mathematics programmes. The team leader for this area mentioned the enormous amount of money the school had spent in order to get these programmes
resourced and running effectively in classrooms. As mentioned by the DP earlier, this system may come under review as the thinking about the relevance of separate curriculum teams was considered. The development of an “Integrated Curriculum” team rather than separate curriculum groups may mean a change to the method of resource allocation also.

The school was well resourced, with students and staff taking full advantage of the wide range of resources available in the school. During the interviews and observations, it was clear that ICT was an integral and integrated part of the day-to-day life of the school. The library was well stocked and good systems for accessing resources were in place. Consideration of the need to organise the planning of topics and particular curriculum strands so that there were no “double-ups or scrambling for equipment” was well thought out by the curriculum planning teams.

2.5 Assessment policy
Responsibility for assessment and evaluation in the school was largely the role of the DP and the principal. However, all reviews of policy or changes in programming and practice were discussed with the staff and new systems and strategies were developed together. The implementation booklet discussed above also included a statement about assessment and evaluation in the school. It talked generally about the purpose and process of assessment in the school. Classroom assessment was acknowledged with statements about what it should include. For instance, it was suggested that classroom assessment should include such things as ongoing, continuous assessment, which provided immediate feedback to enhance learning as it proceeded; in addition, self and peer-assessment was mentioned to enable students to monitor and improve their learning against specific objectives and evidence from their own and others’ work. A list of methods of assessment used in the school was also included covering a wide range of assessment tools such as: five- and six-year surveys, running records, the “Walker” model for writing, PATs, anecdotal notes, conferences – teacher/child, parent/teacher/child, criteria-based assessment/rubrics, Assessment Resource Bank tasks, and work samples. Another statement showed the school’s values and beliefs, principles and practices on assessment. This showed where assessment was able to “fit” into the school value and belief system about good learning and teaching practice and was in diagrammatic form. The school’s assessment schedule showed over the period of a year, planning for school-wide and classroom assessment, and reporting to parents. The plan showed a systematic collection of school-wide data for aggregation to help with future planning, teaching, and resource allocation. Numeracy and literacy were highlighted and some summative testing for aggregation in other curriculum areas was done within the school focus theme. Ongoing formative assessment strategies and techniques were expected to be undertaken within each classroom programme, which may be planned at the team level or by the individual teacher.

Reporting to parents happened on a scheduled basis throughout the year but communication was also encouraged through the school’s open door policy in more informal meetings as needs arose. A feature of the reporting process was the involvement of students in the interviews. They were expected to take a role in this process sharing their progress with their parents and articulating their learning goals and successes. There was also regular reporting to the Board of Trustees on student achievement in a range of curriculum areas.
3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans, and programmes

This has largely been covered in previous sections. Implementation plans were devised for each curriculum area. Curriculum leaders were responsible for the development and review of policies and practices within their curriculum area, with the help of other interested team members. The principal and DP played a large role in this process, being involved in meetings and decision-making. All final decisions were a whole-school “team” effort so that staff felt responsible and empowered to maintain the policies and practices they developed together. The school had a well structured system for reviewing policies and there was a constant effort to improve and enhance the way they developed and delivered learning experiences for children at the school. As stated earlier, the school focused on integrating the curriculum through four “big idea” topics each year. Curriculum areas other than mathematics and literacy were highlighted in these foci with the integration of some of these. For instance, the theme “What’s it worth?” incorporated social studies and science strands and objectives for the second term. Each team level would plan how they would implement these objectives to suit the needs of the children within their classes. One of the teachers interviewed explained that whole-school sharing of the “big idea” topic often occurred near the end of the term, perhaps at an assembly so that children could see how everyone else had interpreted the theme and a “big learning picture” could be developed.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

It seemed that planning for mathematics came from the strand coverage sheet referred to earlier which outlined the term-by-term strands to be covered at each team level. Unit plans were developed by the team co-operatively; however, it appeared that some teachers preferred to plan individually. The introduction of the Early Numeracy Project and Advanced Numeracy Project programmes meant more frequent “shared” planning as teachers came to grips with the new system. It appeared that literacy programmes were often planned individually by the teacher to meet the needs of their children. All planning related back to the school plans and procedures and was then interpreted by the teams or individual teachers.

As indicated previously, teachers within each team level frequently planned units together, based on the “big idea” topic for the term. The school-wide long-term-plan topics were developed into unit plans most frequently within each team, although there was room for teachers to develop their own unit plans if they wished based on their own or their children’s interests. An inquiry learning process was followed for these topics with children taking control of much of the process and the teacher acting as facilitator. The school had created its own inquiry learning planning template that the children generally used when undertaking group or individual investigations. These were widely used by teachers, particularly at the senior level. Strategies, techniques and approaches such as De Bono’s six thinking hats, and PMI (De Bono’s Plus, Minus Interesting strategy) were encouraged as well as reflective writing, multiple intelligences, a commercial programme on developing children’s thinking, and higher order thinking were all suggested as possible ways the children could explore their research questions. These approaches and ideas were introduced and practised in class from the earliest levels. ERO commended the school on its emphasis of encouraging students to “learn how to learn” through the effective development and practice of research and presentation skills.
3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

The teachers used the national curriculum documents, Ministry of Education handbooks, school policies and planning procedures, and long-term plans to assist in the planning of their day-to-day classroom programmes. Classroom programmes and planning were based on the school-wide theme for the term, and on the numeracy and literacy requirements set down by the school. The suggested time schedules for each area were commonly acknowledged by the teachers interviewed as being a good guideline to follow so that their integrated studies did not take over, and a balance was maintained. The teachers interviewed all stated that they saw the curriculum documents as important “tools” to help plan and teach from. However, clearly, the emphasis was on starting from children’s ideas and interests and included the curriculum to help meet these needs, “rather than starting from the objectives and ‘fitting’ the students’ needs into them.” The strong emphasis on the essential skills was obvious in all interviews with management and staff at the school. It was clear that they have done a great deal of thinking about “what” students need to know and “why” as well as “how” these goals should be met in practice. The school focus on “powerful learning” permeated all policies and practices school-wide and classroom-wide.

Unit plans were frequently developed at a team level and teachers then interpreted them into their day-to-day planning for their own classes. In this way, team members were all working to achieve the same objectives but they were able to put their own “stamp on it” to meet their students’ interests and needs. Sometimes teachers chose to do a separate topic from the rest of the team but it was still based on the school-wide theme.

Example: An integrated lesson on the rocky shore (part of the “big theme” - our world, our future)

This observation was an example of how a teacher implemented the integrated theme into her classroom programme. There appeared to be two curriculum areas being addressed in this session, science, and English. The teacher explained that the unit focus was on science but she was currently teaching the children report research skills (from the English curriculum) so they would be able to take on a science investigation independently. She began the lesson by looking at a poem relating to the seashore and asked the children to look for action and describing words within the poem. This linked to a unit on poetry, which they had recently completed so the teacher used this as a way of “killing two birds with one stone with some maintenance work and a link to our current topic.” They then moved on to looking at how to synthesise information which the teacher and children modelled and discussed. The children then went off to work on their own “creature” study and the teacher called groups over to talk to her about their projects.

The planning for this unit had been undertaken as a team and she had interpreted the ideas to suit herself and her children. The teacher talked of the importance of the curriculum documents in her planning but stressed that in an integrated unit, her children’s questions often led her planning and teaching, not the curriculum. She added that the achievement objectives (AOs) from the curriculum were usually general enough to “fit” the children’s interests and inquiries, which she saw as positive. “The curriculum objectives are mostly able to be responsive to the needs and interests of the class.”

Assessment practices in this classroom followed the systems described previously. Formative assessment predominated with a collection of children’s ideas at the start of a unit and ongoing anecdotal recording throughout. The children also were expected to set
goals and peer and self-assess much of their work. The assessment criteria for units of work were shared at the start of the unit with the children so that they were aware of teacher expectations.

The children all appeared motivated and eager to share their learning with me. They were clearly proud of the work displayed around the room and were able to explain the purpose of these presentations. There was also evidence of children’s goal-setting and assessment of their work. One child explained that he liked his classroom because, “We get to do lots of studies about things I’m interested in.” This statement shows that the school’s focus on creating and encouraging student independence and enjoyment of learning was working for this little boy and I suspect, from my discussions and observations, many other children in the school.

4.0 Discussion of findings

It would appear that there was a strong linkage of national curriculum requirements and policy and practice in this school. The National Administration Guidelines, curriculum documents and The New Zealand Curriculum Framework all featured in the school systems and procedures. This school placed a high priority on understanding, learning and teaching, and translating that understanding and reflection into effective practices for staff and students. From observations and discussions with senior management, staff and children, it was clear that this focus was shared by all and that a proactive “learning community” was being developed.

Systems and procedures for curriculum delivery were well organised with staff appearing to be fully supportive of the requirements because they had been a part of their development. There was emphasis on useful and well thought out documentation relating to curriculum delivery and learning and teaching. The value placed by the senior management team on the empowerment of staff and students to become active participants in the school’s vision was obvious to an outsider. The teachers interviewed were able to clearly articulate the purpose behind their actions and link them to school procedures and practices and future goals. This desire to create authentic, powerful learning experiences for everyone involved in the school was continually stressed in interviews with the principal and DP.

Teacher expertise and skill was valued and shared collaboratively amongst the staff. Staff talked freely about each other’s strengths and the best way to employ them to support student learning. Celebrations of staff and student successes were frequently shared in assemblies and staff and class team meetings, an aspect picked up and highlighted by the ERO team during their last visit. Relevant, shared, professional development experiences for teachers appeared to be the key to development of this community of learners. The teachers interviewed felt involved in what happened within the school and that their ideas were valued. There was a school climate that supported and encouraged constructive dialogue and debate. A teacher’s personal, professional development needs were linked to the school appraisal system. Teachers were able to set goals for their learning, which were discussed with their appraiser and further support and guidance was given by senior management. The school Board of Trustees was very supportive of teachers’ ongoing professional development and had provided financial support for individual and whole-school PD initiatives.
Curriculum was a high priority within the school but so, too, was the development of the essential skills of learning. Numeracy and literacy was the key focus, particularly in Years 1-4. However, the emphasis on curriculum integration of some disciplines and inquiry learning processes meant that units of learning generally began with the student’s ideas and queries, and then included the curriculum objectives rather than the other way around.

Curriculum and class teams were able to take responsibility for school-wide development of programmes of instruction and maintenance of resources. Innovation and integration appeared to be key words used by teachers when discussing their aims for planning and delivery of the curriculum. ICT played a large role in classroom programmes with students and teachers using the wide range of resources available to them in an effective, integrated way. The importance of developing the “whole” child (head, heart and hand) was stressed continually in discussions and senior management and staff had done a great deal of reflecting on how to ensure these three areas were catered for within the school and classroom. Children with special abilities and needs were well catered for within the school, receiving extra attention where needed.

Assessment and evaluation appeared to be meaningfully integrated into school policy and classroom practice. School-wide assessment information was collected, particularly in the areas of numeracy and literacy, and used for future planning and resource allocation. Classroom practices predominately involved formative assessment procedures with a focus on student, self, and peer assessment and individual goal-setting. Assessment rubrics (a set of assessment standards that acts as a guide for teacher marking) were used most frequently, developed by the teacher but sometimes co-constructed with students.

There did not appear to be the same amount of emphasis on “accountability” in the interviews and observations undertaken during this case study as there had been in others I have been involved in. This may well be due to the cohesive and collaborative nature of the school culture developed and maintained by the principal and DP. Also, a contributing factor may have been that this was a relatively new school and the staff had been “hand-picked” from the beginning to help ensure that an ongoing philosophy and ethos was developed and maintained. National requirements were incorporated into school practice but only after they had been critiqued as to how they would best “fit” the school’s “way of doing things.” As the DP noted, “We are prepared to take risks and do innovative things here if we know that it will lead to powerful learning for our kids. ERO recognised that when they came, the Board of Trustees support our ideas and the parents appreciate the hard work put in by the teachers to make the learning relevant for their kids.” The overall impression of what was happening in this school was one of a sense of excitement and “passion” about learning and teaching with an ongoing journey of discovery in these areas being shared by senior management, staff, students and the community.

5.0 Summary

- A relatively new, well resourced school with an attractive environment conducive to collaborative teaching and learning.
- National curriculum requirements were being met. The NAGs, NZCF, the essential learning areas and supplementary documents were acknowledged in the school’s policies and procedures and used in teacher-classroom practices.
The school had a well organised curriculum implementation plan in operation. A booklet housing all relevant documents was very user-friendly and informative.

There was a school focus on numeracy and literacy, particularly in Years 1-4.

Integrating the curriculum and inquiry learning approaches was a feature of the school in classroom programmes, particularly in disciplines other than numeracy and literacy. Learning and teaching was organised around four “big idea” themes each term.

There was an emphasis on developing the essential skills as well as meeting the achievement objectives.

ICT was being integrated innovatively into classroom programmes. The school was well resourced in this area.

School-wide curriculum policies and procedures were generally developed by the principal and DP and then shared with team leaders and curriculum teams for their input. Final decisions were generally a whole-staff effort.

Curriculum teams had responsibility for the maintenance and review of policies, procedures and practices in their particular area within the school. The principal and DP played an active role in these developments.

Resource management, including budgets was the responsibility of curriculum teams, which was overseen by the principal and DP.

It was under discussion that separate curriculum teams be replaced by an “integrated curriculum team” when a review of the current system was completed.

Professional development was a high priority in the school and was linked to the school appraisal system.

The Board of Trustees was very supportive of school professional development initiatives. Professional dialogue and debate was part of the school culture and encouraged by the principal and DP.

The school community was well informed about what was happening at the school and appeared to be highly supportive of the staff’s efforts.

Outside expertise had been widely employed to help develop the school’s vision for learning and teaching. However, expertise within the school was also valued and staff members were encouraged to take on leadership roles.

Unit planning was generally a team collaborative exercise based around the term’s theme. It was possible for individual teachers to plan separately if they wished. Numeracy and literacy programmes were generally planned individually.

Assessment and evaluation systems were well structured with school-wide assessment information being collected and analysed for future learning needs and resource allocation. Classroom assessments were generally formative, using a range of approaches.

Students were encouraged to set and monitor their own learning goals. Rubrics were used as a tool for creating assessment criteria, which was shared (and sometimes co-constructed) with the students at the start of a unit of study.
• The school had a strong commitment to developing “powerful learners” and as a result, teachers were continually searching for ways to enhance their practice in this area. Senior management encouraged and supported professional dialogue and debate.

**CP4: A contributing primary school in a large town**

**1.0 Description**

This school, a contributing primary (Years 1-6) was situated in a large town. It had a roll of 422 and a teaching staff of 18. Its ethnic composition was Māori 16%, Pakeha 82%, Pasifika 1%, and Asian 1%. Its decile rating was seven. Classes were composite groups, usually comprising pupils from two consecutive Year levels. The teachers consisted of a highly experienced group, with six having taught for more than 20 years and another six for between 10 and 20 years. There was one beginning teacher.

The school’s most recent ERO report (1999) stated that the school was delivering a balanced curriculum. All teachers had schemes of work that set out school curriculum policy and requirements in planning, teaching, and monitoring of the seven essential learning areas. Classes were grouped into three teaching syndicates, each under the supervision of a senior teacher with responsibility for ensuring every student was provided with a quality education. These syndicates tended to work independently but curriculum committees worked across the school to ensure a seamless transition as students’ progress through achievement levels. Good quality planning, teaching and monitoring of student progress was evident, with an emphasis placed on student achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Despite nearly three years having passed since the time of the ERO review, it appeared that little had changed and that description would hold true in 2002. This school had been led since 1986 by the same principal and deputy principal (DP) who have both been at the school for 17 years, and along with a stable core of other very long-term staff they have developed a well understood school culture supported by a comprehensive and robust system of documentation. Each of the national curriculum documents has been translated into a school guideline intended to make clear to teachers all aspects of implementation from planning to assessment and reporting. A cycle of regular and ongoing review ensured that policy kept pace with practice, and written procedures remained relevant.

In the first instance, the principal cited the dedication of his staff as the primary contributor to the effectiveness of the school. He said:

*We have always been fortunate to have very keen people and people that have done the job very enthusiastically and conscientiously. I think we are (a group of) ordinary people who work to do our best for our kids, [to] make our school as good as it can be.*

While acknowledging the scope and importance of the documentation, he saw the syndicates as being the real powerhouses of practice and curriculum implementation in the school.

*We have got our documentation, and I think what we’ve got we’ve done sincerely and we’ve done it as I think it suits our kids and our situation. We’ve*
got our guidelines, how you do [it] and so on in the school. But our syndicates (syndicate members) work very closely together, in terms of they share planning and they seem to be interested in each other. [Curriculum implementation] is generally done through the syndicates, through the syndicate leaders, and people in the syndicates collectively. I think it really comes from all the staff.

This strong “people first” attitude was demonstrated in the principal’s approach to his own role as school leader. He maintains a highly visible profile around the school and visits all classrooms several times each during the day. He explained:

I’m out and about, I’m not a great one for going into a room and sitting and observing what’s going right or wrong for a long period of time but my aim - and I believe that I achieve it most days - (is): I’m in every room between 8.20 and 9.00 o’clock - that is just a good morning call! Everything all right? Set for the day? Any worries? Anything you need?

I then try to get into every classroom three times a day in each of the teaching periods. That might, to some people, it may sound a bit demeaning for principals, but I’m quite happy. As I go past the office I’ll say I’m going round the school are there any things to deal with or take, or messages, and I’ll go and do those. I’ll be into the room, talk to two or three kids on the way through, a quick word to the teachers - and I believe that I know the children.

The principal saw this approach as not only supportive of teachers, but regular contact with the children gave him a real working knowledge of all his students. Seeing children engaged in learning was, for him, a real barometer to all else that is happening. He continues:

I don’t collect the work plans, go through those and tick off, like my bosses used to do. My “number one” is for children to be engaged in learning in whatever area they are on at that time. If they are engaged, and they are motivated, and they are enjoying what they’re doing, then I believe they must be learning.

The psyche of the school is that we are here to work. Work hard in the classroom! That’s something we indoctrinate the kids with - and generally that’s what they’re doing. If they are doing that, I’m delighted.

If they’re not engaged in learning then it’s time for me to have a look at the documentation to see if the work plans and so on are in place, but for me it’s what the kids are doing and how they’re doing it. I think if the kids are engaged in learning then [they] have very few problems, and by my going round, I think I can say quite confidently that that happens to a very large degree here.

The principal’s expressed keenness to see children “engaged,” and “at work,” and his, “we are here to work” philosophy was repeated by senior management and classroom teachers interviewed later.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

As mentioned above by the principal, the school was organised into three syndicates each led by a member of the senior management team. Each syndicate had its own style of operation, as described by one teacher who has had direct experience with them all.
Our syndicate runs brilliantly. All the syndicates do but they’re all completely different. We’re (the junior syndicate) probably the one that’s in the middle. We plan to a certain degree but there are some things that we do together and then we have some spin-off. The middle syndicate tends to do everything the same and the senior syndicate (members) tends to spin-off and do their own thing. So we sort of fall in the middle. We do bits of both.

A key function of the syndicates, as described by the same teacher was planning. While each syndicate completed it to different levels, it was based on the school curriculum guidelines that have been prepared to both interpret, and support the implementation of each of the essential learning areas. Each teacher had a boxed set of these guidelines in their classroom and all of those interviewed referred to using them.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

As new curriculum documents have been released, the school has interpreted and translated them for local use. School-based curriculum committees, usually made up of a small group of teachers with some knowledge or interest in the particular learning area, began by working with outside agencies, such as school advisers or Ministry of Education contract facilitators. These committee members were made familiar with the structure and content of a new curriculum document and then led in-house professional development sessions, usually at staff meetings, to familiarise others. In some cases, for example, health and physical education, curriculum committees have also led sessions to familiarise parents and other school community members with the content of a new document and to seek input into what implementation should include. The curriculum co-ordinator for health education elaborated:

When the document first came it was my brief to actually introduce it to the PTA. I took photocopies of what I thought were relevant pieces and I did a brief introduction of what was in the document at a PTA meeting. We had some questionnaire type things about what people expected from the school as far as health education went.

The curriculum committees then organised the content of the new document into a working form that was put to staff for comment. The co-ordinator continued:

The committee went on the contract, one from each syndicate, and they gave us tasks to do. After the first meeting we did what we thought was the required task, we had a look through our “barriers to learning,” which we already, previously as a staff, had identified - so as a committee we had actually looked through what we had, and re-adjusted and re-ordered and added to, and we roughed out how we thought we might actually organise curriculum content, comparing it to what we had already had and went back to the meetings - curriculum contract meeting.

[When we went back] they said we’d really covered what they were going to do in the next two contract meetings. So they left us to really refine what we’d done. We’d tried to organise the content into a two-year time frame and we knew that before we actually did anything with our staff we wanted to see how that fitted into what people on the contract thought about how we’d done it, and they seem to think that we had a pretty good base for starting with.

So when we came up with what we thought was a working draft that had been based on the responses we’d had from the community, we got it together and each of us took it to our syndicates. There we picked it to pieces and then we met again. Not easy meeting again after school between all our other meetings, day-in and day-out and you don’t deal with that sort of thing in five minutes.
either! When we finally had what we thought was a working document, we presented it at a staff meeting, so they had their say as to what they thought would work, or if we’d missed anything out, and we were pretty much [in agreement] around the table on it and had it printed up, and so we tried it.

Following a period of trial and consolidation, often supported by further staff members being offered professional development, the implementation plan was reviewed:

I called a meeting of the committee at the beginning of this year to see how they thought it was going in their syndicate. We had a talk about what they think is happening in their syndicate with it and I think the consensus is that the way we’ve got it structured is working well. [Some] people tend not to be doing like a two-week unit, they’re referring to it all the time. If they’ve got it in as a unit for term two, we’ve got a safety component in every term, people are just really letting the theme run through the class. To actually be sure that we’ve covered the requirements we’ve got it written in on a two-year rotation and people seem pretty happy with it, we’ve had no real suggestions to change it so we have decided to just let it run for another year. That’s really where it stands now, we’re using it and we think it’s running okay, people seem happy with it, so that’s really where it is.

The health and physical education curriculum guideline referred to above was divided into two parts. One was specifically for health, the second for physical education. This was partly for ease of use by teachers but also reflected the importance the school had placed on physical education for its students as detailed in its charter. As a set these guidelines contained:

- Curriculum guide statement. This says *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework, 1993* will form the basis for teaching at this school;
- School policy statement;
- Implementation plan. This includes school philosophy, organisation, programme of learning (with links to NAGs), assessment, monitoring and evaluation, resources, and budget;
- Programmes of work. Suggestions for levels 1, 2, and 3;
- Appendices. These include barriers to learning and strategies to overcome, resources, useful names and addresses, teacher planning tracking sheet; and
- Lesson plan exemplars.

It was a typical example of the guidelines for each of the seven essential learning areas.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

Planning began in each syndicate at a meeting towards the end of each year. Syndicate teams were released from their classes for a day to meet and devise a long-term plan for the following year. Achievement objective coverage was a prime consideration and what has or has not been covered in the preceding year informed the process. A teacher explained:

*Every year - at the end of the year - we plan for the following 12 months. We get together, it’s not a strict timetable that we have to adhere to but it gives us an overview of the sorts of things we’d like to do during the year. We sit down*
and look at things that perhaps we hadn’t covered in so much depth and we think of what sort of topics we could identify that would bring those achievement objectives to the focus that we perhaps need to work on over that year and so we come up with on that day. I’ve got a lot of planning from previous years so we’ve built up a file of the sorts of things that we have covered in the last few years in the way of the achievement objectives. So once we’ve identified the objectives, we identify a topic that will sort of act as a vehicle for the implementation of the objectives.

Contexts for learning are often drawn from the curriculum guidelines and aimed at meeting identified local needs, as the assistant principal added:

They’ve already been set, we’ve looked through the curriculum documents [and] they have some suggestions but I mean there are some topics that I think better meet some of the objectives that are set out in the document anyway. A lot of them are fairly traditional, what we feel are fairly important anyway for our children, like in health [education] and making friends at the start of years, safe playing is important, so a lot of those topics they have been written for the curriculum guides in the school and from there we take them out.

Following from these yearly plans the only other mandatory requirement for teachers was completion of their own daily plan books. All teachers interviewed prepared unit plans and this was undertaken as either a team or individual activity depending on the syndicate they worked in. The DP explained:

We’ve three syndicates in the school and from what I can see I think (we have) three different ways of doing things. One syndicate works very, very closely together and they do an awful lot of planning together and all that sort of thing. I don’t do that in my syndicate. I, my teachers, have a fair degree of independence and individuality. During the year we’ll do one or two units together as a whole group. This year we did a land forms one, last year we did a horse industry one and worked as a whole syndicate. We all sit down and plan together, look at it together, discuss the process together, what we’re going to do, what visits and all that sort of thing.

The middle syndicate leader, contrasted her team’s approach:

We meet as a syndicate once a week. Sometimes that is for curriculum review type things, sometimes it is planning, sometimes it is housekeeping type things but we work very co-operatively and very closely as a group and so that’s when we would get to the fine-tuning of a particular area that we would be looking at. We usually meet at the end of each term to do that more extensive planning for the units coming up in the following one so that over the holidays we’ve got time to think of resources or if we’re going on a trip we’ll usually go as a group to go and check out the particular place that we’re visiting or set up guest speakers that might come into the room so we tend to do that planning more towards the end of one term so that then we’ve got the holidays in which to prepare.

This teacher’s description of how the syndicate met in the holidays to visit places the children can be taken to on trips was an indication of how seriously this aspect of planning was taken.

Despite the differing approaches to planning by the syndicates, informal checks and balances are achieved in a number of other ways. The senior syndicate regularly cross-groups the children for mathematics, fitness and PE, and music. In addition to the obvious advantages of such arrangements like utilising
Commitment to a timetable that required teachers to work closely with others in some curriculum areas was used as a method of ensuring those areas were guaranteed a prescribed allocation of time.

The genuine interest in each other, and working together for a common purpose described by the principal was clearly evidenced in this type of commitment to support each other. This integrity and professional approach to their work was also highlighted by one leader describing how she did not feel she needed to formally check on teachers in her syndicate. She was able to gauge the effectiveness of teachers’ programmes by their attitude and by the general tone of the syndicate. She said:

> From time to time, I do spend some time in the classrooms but it’s not on a regular basis. The teachers, I think I have a relationship with the other teachers in the syndicate - that they feel that they can come to me to ask me things or ask for ... [for example], can you give us some more ideas on how I could take this? Or, I tried something that you said the other day about relating a traditional story into a mathematics lesson and things like that. I think just from the tone of the whole syndicate you can get an impression for how the individual rooms are working.

While the curriculum guidelines set out clear directions for curriculum implementation across the school, and both the principal and senior staff had well honed senses of what was or was not happening in classrooms based on school tone, there was also another very effective system of monitoring curriculum implementation. A detailed assessment schedule, and some school-wide requirements for recording information served to focus teachers clearly on the delivery of effective programmes. A teacher commented:

> There’s an expectation with the assessment of baseline things that are done in every room and that is a “not-negotiable” type thing. There are written language profiles, which are filled in some certain way, because of the expectation that paperwork would be done, the programmes would have to have been in place for those particular assessments to be made. In mathematics and reading and language areas, there are particular profile sheets that each child has and that come through each year, all of those profile sheets and things, because some of them are used over a period of years, come in a bundle with the child, and I would soon pick up a particular room coming through that didn’t have certain work samples that showed some sort of development.

The shared nature of assessment information served to ensure that programmes were implemented as planned.

**Example**

In-depth interviews were conducted with two classroom teachers. Each worked in a different area of the school, each of the two teachers having a different level of teaching experience.
Teacher 1

This teacher has a Year 5-6 class, still referred to at the school as standard three and four. She had been teaching for a number of years at this school, the whole period at this level.

She felt that the national curriculum documents were not specific enough. She would like to see them spell out exactly what children should be achieving at each level, and to also include teaching and learning experiences that would facilitate this. This, she said, would assist teachers such as herself when they felt a lack of expertise in some areas, to feel that they were delivering a curriculum area more effectively. She cited several examples to make her point:

\textit{At the moment I don’t think it’s specific enough. I would like the curriculum to say, by the end of level 3, [state] that they should be able to do this. For example, science, I’ve got a good handle on that, but with the support books that go with it, those are really beneficial and give a good guide as to what you should be doing. Technology I have no idea! So yeah, I expect the curriculum to be able to tell me “this is what the children need to know,” and give me some examples so that then I can go from there and know that I’m on the right track.}

The long-term planning process began when her syndicate met near the end of a year to decide on what they would cover as a group the following year. Release time was provided for this purpose. An outline was made up with areas of overlap between classes co-ordinated. It was stressed that this outline was brief and considerable freedom existed for individual teachers to develop their own more detailed plans:

\textit{About September or October we have a day where we plan what we are going to do as a syndicate over the following year. We work out - Are we going to have a certain focus in week 7 of term two on, say, safety or health or music or whatever? So we have a brief long-term plan set up. Some teachers may put down more information than what I do. I just, sort of, like notes for myself to say we are following the NIE, our PE programmes, “things” like that, so that we know, as a syndicate, “what’s happening.” From there we have the independence, or the freedom to do whatever we want in our classroom, so it’s really just fitting in some really basic units and plans and then, from there, we have the freedom to do what we want.}

The depth of local experience that existed in the syndicate allowed contexts for learning that had been successful in the past, and suited the needs of the school’s community, to be utilised and re-used. The teacher elaborated on this idea by citing the example that the syndicate as a group included in their plan for study this year.

\textit{Our local land forms had been done a couple of years ago and I knew that it was a good unit that the kids got a lot from so we decided to do that unit again. We sort of have the philosophy that “why reinvent the wheel” if we’ve got a unit that works well, you know why not use it again? So we knew it worked well and decided to do it again.}

Drawing on local knowledge and past experience, however, did not mean exactly the same thing was repeated year after year. Plans were always updated and revised to suit changing needs.
I think about what I have done in the past that I know is good, what has worked well, but you never use it the same as the first time that you used it. You are always revising it.

With a skeletal outline for the year prepared at syndicate level, this teacher, then prepared a somewhat more detailed term plan for herself. Some unit plans were prepared as a syndicate but mostly, as she explained, she also prepared these herself, drawing on both the national curriculum documents and various support materials. She explained, “It depends on whether we have decided to do it as a syndicate [but] most units that I do are ones that I want to do so it’s individual.” Rather than discrete units of work, for some learning areas just an ongoing series of lessons were developed. For example, in English particular elements were focused on individually:

In English, there are not actually a lot of units, there are more ongoing lesson plans. For writing, I am using the assessment book, that NEMP [National Education Monitoring Project] book that came out a few years ago. That’s got wonderful ideas in it for writing activities so I just tend to break it up, the handwriting, the presenting, the spelling, the reading, the writing so it’s not really units as such, they’re just continual ongoing things.

In linking her plans to the national curriculum documents, the teacher was taking a pragmatic approach and was guided by the school’s assessment schedule. When planning work, she chose objectives she knew would inform an assessment record later in the year:

When I’m planning I always look to find the objective that I should be looking at because I know at the end of the year when you have your cards that you’ve got to fill in, and I think, what’s the point of doing a unit if there’s nothing there that I could fill in? I know you are not supposed to work that way, but in reality you’ve got to, I think! So I go and think, “Right, I’m looking at level 3, objective 2.” You know this is the column I am going to be filling in, so I have to have my specific learning outcomes based around this.

She took a similar business-like approach in describing what she saw as the purpose of her plans. She stated quite clearly they were to keep her on task, and hopefully, by modeling an organised approach to work, the children would pick up on this ethic:

If you don’t plan, how do you know what you want to get done? If you don’t plan you can waste a whole week of having fun on activities that serve no purpose at all when you could be, you know, finishing off something or getting into something important that fulfils the curriculum so, if I show that I’m focused, then hopefully that’s going to translate to the kids.

Collegial support and the availability of resources were seen by the teacher as being very helpful when it came to both planning and teaching. She identified resources as both physical and human.

It’s the support that’s within the school. You always know who the person is to go to, like I’m the music person in the school, so I know the resources that are around and if anyone has a music question they come to me. You know who your people are in the school for science, mathematics, or whatever, that can help. I think we are well resourced, for example, we’ve got great mathematics and science cupboards, a staff library, there are resource areas all over the place!
Conversely, this teacher regarded a lack of time due to an extremely busy school programme as being the greatest hindrance to her fully implementing her plans, and she often wished for “an extra hour in the day”:

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I \text{ think time is the biggest factor because you have so many disruptions, particular in the senior syndicate because so many things happen. We’ve got the production on this term so there are going to be kids pulled out for lots of rehearsals, we’ve had all the New South Wales tests so they go out for 40 minutes, we have Māori (language lessons) for some children... Thursday and Friday - you can’t do anything with your whole class.}
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In relation to this same time pressure constraint, she went on to express some ambivalence towards syndicate programmes which, while on the one hand, reduced her workload, also reduced the amount of time she had available with her whole class.

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The way our senior syndicate works is really good, we stream for our mathematics, we stream for our fitness, we have a rotation with our P.E., which is really good... it means I only have to plan one unit and evaluate one unit and I get all these evaluations from the other teachers, which is wonderful. At the same time, it sort of cuts into your day a lot as well though.
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This teacher described herself as “a real assessment person.” She kept meticulous records of test and other marks that she monitored to gauge student learning.

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For example, for maths I do a lot of recording. With their pre-tests and mastery tests I always make a note of what they got. I also keep a note of how well they improve, whether they’re making big jumps from their pre-test and mastery test or whether they’re only improving slightly, so I have a feel for the child.
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She uses formative assessment to help drive up student achievement.

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I \text{ think a simple comment like “good work” or “excellent work” is not enough. It’s not really feedback and there’s always room for improvement. It doesn’t matter how good something is, there’s always room to improve.}
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Her marks and other assessment records were also used in a summative way and helped her to believe that she was accurately reporting to parents. She described another use for her records as, “so I know whether they’ve achieved their objective or not. If I’m writing a comment on a report I like to have the information to back it up.”

In assessing children’s work this teacher was flexible in her approach. Her assessments were based on planned objectives but she was prepared to adapt planned tasks if the focus of a lesson changed.

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Well, it depends on what I’ve decided would be an assessment task and often, that changes too as the unit goes along. You might find that there’s a shift in focus, or there might be something that the kids really pick up on and you think, I can go with that but still within those objectives that you’re focusing on.
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A consistency of approach throughout the syndicate, and even across the whole school, promoted a strong work ethic among students and there was a strong expectation that children would achieve.

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I \text{ often say to the kids if you don’t get this finished you are going to have to finish this in your own time and I make sure I see that through. I try to tell my}
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This consistency of expectation and approach supported the school culture of children “being there to work.”

Example: In the classroom:
At 9.30 each morning teacher 1 takes a group of 30 for mathematics. These children are working at level 3b (the top half of level 3) and level 4a (the lower half of level 4). When I visited the classroom the group, 15 boys and 15 girls, were seated at desks in clusters of 4-6. Work began immediately the children were seated with a two-minute subtraction exercise/game warm up. The children were given a list of numbers and asked to subtract 12 from each. Following completion the children swapped papers and teacher 1 called the answers. She then asked each child individually if they got their answers all correct and recorded their either, “yes,” or “no” response.

Teacher 1 then moved to the front of the room, wrote 1/5 of 30 on the whiteboard, and asked, “If I wanted to find one fifth of 30, what operation would I use?” A child responded, “Division.” Teacher 1 wrote 30 ÷ 5 = 6 on the board and replied, “Yes, thirty divided by five equals six, so one fifth of thirty is six.” She then asked about and followed the same process with division of 1/2 of 24 and 1/3 of 18. She then asked, “What about 2/8 of 24?” One child asked, “Would you divide 24 by 8?” The teacher wrote 24 ÷ 8 = 3 on the board and replied, “That takes care of the 8, what now?” The same child responded, “Would you multiply by two?” The teacher wrote 2 x 3 = 6 on the board and replied, “Yes, 2/8 of 24 is 6.” She then repeated the process with divisions of 2/3 of 18 and 3/4 of 16.

The teacher then drew a grid pattern containing 16 squares on the whiteboard and asked how many squares would need to be shaded to cover three quarters of the pattern? She repeated the above process with the children, first, dividing 16 by 4, shading four squares and explaining if 16 ÷ 4 = 4 then four squares was one quarter. She then asked the children for the answer to 4 x 3 and shaded 12 squares. She drew another grid with twenty squares and repeated the exercise to find ratios, for example, 3/4 of the area.

The children were then assigned a worksheet of practice exercises copied from the National Curriculum Mathematics (Caxton Educational, 2000) textbook and given 15 minutes to complete it. The teacher circulated around the class, assisting and checking children’s work. After a few minutes she called the whole class to attention and reminded them to write their answers in full, i.e., divisions of 5/8 of 32, 32 ÷ 8 = 4, 4 x 5 = 20, divisions of 5/8 of 32 = 20 etc. The teacher continued to circulate and work individually with several children. At the end of the assigned 15 minutes, she called the answers, and again asked for and recorded children’s results.

The mathematics lesson was from a unit on fractions, percentages and decimals. It was structured and followed a recognised format beginning with maintenance, moved into the teaching of a main point and followed with practice and consolidation. The practice activity came directly from the text National Curriculum Mathematics. The senior syndicate uses this series of textbooks as a major resource for mathematics teaching. The lesson was very structured, as is most morning session work for the senior syndicate.
Mathematics ended at 10.25 and was followed by the whole syndicate reforming into ability-based groups for 20 minutes of fitness activities on the school field. Teacher 1 took a lesser ability group for a series of activities using hoops and small balls. Both mathematics and daily fitness were timetabled activities and children were streamed into ability-based groups.

**Teacher 2**

Teacher 2 had a Year 1 class. She had been teaching for several years, mostly at this school. Teacher 2 believed the national curriculum should provide a broad outline of what was required to be taught within each essential learning area, but, however, that it should be flexible enough to allow teachers to develop their own interests and teaching styles within outlines.

> I think we’ve all got strengths and weaknesses and if you’re too constrained by a document, it can actually stymie what you’re trying to do. If you’ve got a little bit of flexibility in it, you can convey some of your own attitudes and things through. I’m very uncomfortable with being told exactly what to do and how to do it. It’s taken us four years to train, supposedly we’ve come out knowing how to do something. I think it’s important that you’re allowed to use some of those things.

Despite this preference for flexibility, she felt some of the curriculum documents were not specific enough. She identified the mathematics document in particular as one for which she had concerns. She had undertaken recent university work to improve her own knowledge and expertise in this area but still worried for both the children in her class, and her own sons who were still at primary school.

> I think the maths (document) is shocking. I took myself back to the University of Waikato last year as I thought the maths document, well it’s too airy-fairy. I have boys of my own that are still within the primary system and it’s a major concern.

She believed some mathematics programmes were neither rigorous nor challenging enough and too much was time spent on activities that did not produce anything tangible at the end.

> I think we play too many games and things with them and they actually need to learn to sit down and get on with things. What happens is that they’re not actually given the experience of systematically working through something from start to finish. I think we should be accountable for every child and I think at some stage they have to sit down do something. You have to have something tangible at the end of an exercise.

Her feelings on this point were consistent with the principal’s expressed philosophy that children at the school were “there to work.” They were also reflected in her class setting, with a quite formal and task-centred class programme each morning, (as with the whole school).

Planning was largely undertaken co-operatively in teacher 2’s junior syndicate. Long-term plans were formulated on a yearly basis and then unit plans to support them made up by interested individuals and shared with the group.

> We do it as a syndicate, we get together once at the end of each year and we “semi” long-term plan for the following year. Then from that we spin off and have selected curriculum areas that we volunteer to do the writing up of units
for. We write the units and share them around everybody else and then we have the flexibility to actually tease them out or compact them according to how we want to do things.

This teacher then had the freedom to adapt these unit plans to suit her own class needs. She described how she viewed the school’s curriculum co-ordinators as playing a central role in linking a teacher’s plans to the national curriculum documents through school policies and curriculum guidelines.

We have leadership roles within the school ... I don’t actually have any of them, but you’ll be speaking to [another teacher] later, she’s an example of one with the health which has been recently updated, and she and a couple of the others further up the school have gone through and they know the document very well, so we’ve made sure that our planning sheets are actually up-to-date and what we’re doing is actually relevant.

These curriculum co-ordinators worked closely with outside agencies, such as [named] school advisers, to gain an in-depth knowledge of a curriculum document that they then passed on to the staff.

Usually what happens is that we have people that come in, at the moment we have a focus on literacy, [named adviser] is doing the literacy thing. We have facilitators that come out and then it’s sort of a branching down process I suppose. It seems to work reasonably well. I mean we’re probably not 100% up-to-date with everything, but I think you’d find we’re not too bad.

While this teacher felt that perhaps the system was not perfect, it seemed to work for teachers at this school. Teacher 2 expressed the view that as she gained experience she saw less and less of a need for some written plans. She felt she knew many aspects of her junior class programme, for example, reading, so well she was able to teach them without the need for updating her written plans. She added, however, that this did not mean she was not receptive to new ideas.

The older I’m getting, the less I probably use them [written plans]. With reading I know the early books really well because we go over and over them, so I think there are some things that you just know work after you’ve been doing it for hundreds of years, which isn’t to say that if something new comes in that we don’t try it, because we do.

Teacher 2 discussed Brain Gym as an idea she was investigating with a colleague from a neighbouring room. A willingness to share ideas with each other was noted as one of the most important features of the junior syndicate and something that assisted her greatly in both planning and teaching.

Our syndicate runs brilliantly, [and] a lot of it is that we all get on really well. We all work in well together. If I walk into the assistant principal’s room and I like something he’s doing, I snitch it, and we all do that. You know we all go off on different tangents with things and that’s where the flexibility is important, but if you see something that’s going really well, you just pinch the idea and adapt it. We all do that.

A strong culture of support was evident in her quote. While there was a freedom or “flexibility” within the syndicate to “all go off on different tangents,” members all obviously felt comfortable sharing ideas in a collaborative, team-oriented manner.
Major factors identified as hindering Teacher 2’s teaching related directly to the children. First, she felt high numbers in a junior classroom could make effective curriculum delivery difficult and there was a price to be paid for the school’s reputation.

Sometimes it’s the numbers of children in a class. I’ve had up to 37 children in a room! That’s hellishly hard! It’s because the school has got such a good name, we draw a huge number of children, which is why we’ve had to start another class now. So that is a constraint and it’s difficult.

The readiness of children entering the class could also be a limiting factor as some were not prepared for the programme teacher 2 thought appropriate for children at that level.

It’s the ability of children coming in. Sometimes I think you actually need an immersion class for some children so that they can just get used to the whole idea of being in school. The little ones I’ve got now, some of them were only next-door for three weeks before they came through to me. I spent the three weeks at the end of last term just “taming them” to sit down and do things, because while they’re swinging off the rafters and doing things like that, you can’t do anything!

The assessment tasks this teacher carried out were those listed for her children on the school’s assessment schedule and were heavily literacy- and numeracy-based. Reading running records, in particular, she found useful and administered more often than required.

We have a language review that we go through, we do samples of written work, we do running records, some of us do them more often but there’s a set number that we actually have to do in a year. We can keep anecdotal records if we like but I actually find I don’t have mine long enough to do that, so unless there’s a real problem I certainly don’t see any point in making work for myself in doing them. It’s no use writing down, “[name] is a very nice child.” That’s just a waste of time. Maths we do a semi-standardised test across the syndicate at various stages.

Records are kept on an “if required” basis and the teacher sees no point in writing some things just for the sake of it.

In the classroom:
A visit to teacher 2’s Year 1 classroom at 10 o’clock one morning found her 22 children engaged in a number of different activities. Three children were reading in a group with the teacher, two were working at a computer, two were on the floor drawing on small blackboards, four were working at a table with a teacher aide and 13 others were sitting in groups at tables printing.

For the next 30 minutes the programme proceeded as follows:

10.05: The teacher called another reading group and asked if they were ready. She circulated around several tables checking children’s work. She commented to several children about how well they were positioning their letters on the line, and demonstrated shape improvements to one or two others.

10.09: The teacher returned to the readers and asked them to find the word, “look” in their books while she updated their notebooks.
10.11: The teacher asked the reading group to turn to the front and recite the alphabet.
   Children: “… F for fish, … P for panda, … Z for zebra.”
   She then pointed to an alphabet chart and asked them to find the following words:
   “mouse, watch, duck, rabbit, insect, octopus, egg, queen.”
   As children found each they replied, “O for octopus, E for egg” etc.

10.14: The teacher then asked who had found the word, “look.” Several children excitedly put up their hands. Teacher: “How do you spell look?”
   One child, “L”
   Teacher, “oo oo oo”
   Same child, “o”
   Teacher, “o”
   Child, “K for kangaroo!”

10.15: Teacher claps hands. Class comes to attention and children put their hands on their heads. Teacher, “You have five more minutes (points to clock). That will be when the big black hand is on the four, and then I am going to collect all the printing books.”

10.16: Returning to the readers the teacher said, “Look at Gobble Goat’s ribs. He looks?”
   Child, “Hungry.”
   The children read through the story together aloud several times.
   At one point the teacher asked, “What was the question she asked?”
   Child answered, “Where is the lunch?”
   Teacher, “Show me the question mark.”

10.21: The teacher clapped for attention again and directed children to place printing books on a pile in a designated spot. Children then moved off and selected activities.

10.25: The teacher called and began a similar session with another reading group.

The lesson time was formal and structured, and followed a pattern the children were obviously familiar with. The main focus of the time was on literacy activities. While the teacher worked with groups of readers, others practised handwriting (demonstrated to the class on a blackboard just prior to my arrival in the room). A teacher aide was utilised to assist small groups with story writing. The Jolly Phonics approach was used with the reading groups.

4.0 Discussion of findings

Curriculum implementation at this school was approached in different ways by each of the three syndicates. While each began by working together to draft a yearly long-term plan, senior syndicate teachers then worked largely independently from each other to complete their own more detailed plans. Close contact between teachers in this syndicate was maintained though cross-groups children from each of its five classes, according to ability, for mathematics and daily fitness lessons. The middle syndicate, in contrast, tended to
work quite closely together and completed most planning as a team. The junior syndicate incorporated a combination of both team and individual planning. Despite the differences in approach of each syndicate, cohesion across the school was achieved in several important ways. School practice was made clear in comprehensive and detailed guideline documents prepared by curriculum co-ordinators for each of the essential learning areas. A detailed assessment schedule set out annual requirements. Established school culture, including consistency of expectations, was understood and demonstrated by a core of experienced and long-serving staff members. The principal has led the school for 17 years. Morning school programmes are characterised by a formal approach and focus largely on numeracy and literacy.

The views propounded by the principal, the various curriculum and syndicate leaders, and the teachers who took part in the study showed an overall consistency in their approach. What was described during interviews was evident in teacher planning and assessment folders and demonstrated in classrooms.

An important issue that arose with one teacher who was observed teaching, is the degree of academic challenge in the curriculum statements. Mathematics was a particular case, with the teacher arguing that children were given plenty of mathematics activities, but they lacked intellectual challenge for many children. To that teacher, there needed to be more mathematics time taken up with systematic teaching and learning, and less on activities that are “intangible.” This is an issue that deserves further exploration in future curriculum research. It is, too, an issue that needs to be addressed by the teachers themselves; is it true? If so, what can be done about it?

5.0 Summary

- The most recent ERO report indicated that a balanced curriculum was planned and delivered in this school, and the evidence from this project has supported that that was still the case three years later.
- The principal maintained a strong and “visible” role in supporting the teachers, including regular visits to classrooms.
- There was a strong, “We are here to work” ethos and expectation among teachers and children and teachers.
- Regular use was made of staff curriculum committees for planning and professional development.
- There was a clear annual cycle of curriculum planning, although the syndicates worked differently within a common framework.
- There was a clear school-wide assessment policy.
- Units of work were planned by syndicates and adapted by individual teachers.
- In some curriculum areas (for example, mathematics) streaming within Year cohorts was used, based upon achievement.
- An issue of whether all children were sufficiently challenged was raised.

CP5: A contributing primary school in a large town
1.0 Description

School CP5 is a contributing primary (Years 1-6) situated in a large town. It had a roll of 382 and a teaching staff of 23. Its ethnic composition was Māori 22%; Pakeha 74%; and Other 4%. It had a decile rating of four. Most classes were composite groups, usually comprising pupils from two consecutive Year levels. The classroom teachers were a largely experienced group of teachers: seven having taught for more than 15 years each, a further four with between 5 to 15 years’ experience, and only three with two years’ or less teaching experience.

The latest ERO report (2002) stated that students are receiving high quality learning experiences delivered by a team of committed and knowledgeable teachers. The curriculum was effectively managed with individual implementation plans for each essential learning area. These provided specific guidelines for teachers including: policy statements for the particular learning area; a selection of possible planning templates, tracking sheets, teaching practice exemplars, and assessment requirements and procedures.

It was also noted however that, “Current classroom practice is ahead of some of the school’s documentation, and it would be timely to re-examine some implementation plans to include information which reflects new developments and approaches” (ERO, 2002).

The principal, new to the school in late 2001, concurred with the ERO report but decided a major review of all curriculum implementation documentation was actually necessary. Practice was ahead of policy in many areas. The school’s review cycle had been broken and the task of reviewing all documentation would be lengthy. He believed it might possibly never re-align so a review and simplification of all curriculum implementation plans was being undertaken. The aim was to create a curriculum support system that both reflected current practice and could be easily kept up-to-date.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The approach to curriculum implementation could be described as “dynamic” - a living, or people-based system rather than paper-based system. The principal viewed teacher practice in the first instance as being based on “tight team planning.” The teams referred to were interrelated groups with responsibility for various aspects of school management. A senior management team was comprised of the principal, a deputy principal (DP), and an associate principal (AP), and two senior teachers. The school’s 15 classes were organised into two syndicates. A junior syndicate consisted of nine classes from Year 0 to Year 4, and a senior syndicate of six classes from Years 5 and 6. The junior syndicate was led by the AP, the senior by the DP. The school was then further broken into three planning teams made up four to six teachers from close Year-level classes, each led by one of the senior staff. A bilingual class team with class teachers from both syndicates also met for planning that was specific to the school’s two bilingual classes. A somewhat more informal “buddy system” operated for pairs of teachers to mentor and support each other’s planning and teaching. These teams, especially the syndicate and planning teams, were seen as the engine rooms of curriculum implementation by the principal. He explained:

The key is going back to the teams. The team planning is tight. It does go back to the core documents, the curriculum documents, they serve as a structure (but) I believe it is the team planning that drives the quality up. A lot gets
The teams developed long-term plans for each term, and then units for most areas except English and reading. The teams used the curriculum documents as a “structure” for their planning but they also pooled “best practice” examples consistent with “cultural norms,” or the “[school’s name] way.” In this forum, ideas could be “thrashed around” until an agreed understanding of what was to happen was reached. This shared understanding, in the principal’s view, provided a framework for individual teacher curriculum implementation in line with “their own personal vision.”

This quote also serves to illustrate a key aspect of the principal’s view of his role as a curriculum leader. For example, he indicates that he “trusts” in teachers’ “professional integrity,” and in their ability to “interpret” the agreed plan. He explained this more explicitly in response to a question about how he knew the curriculum was being implemented:

A lot of it has to come down to professional integrity and trust. It’s old fashioned but it’s true, the old 10-second test, you can get into a classroom and you can say to yourself, I can see things are happening here or they’re not. You can see it in the kids’ eyes. I make a point of getting around all the classrooms informally, as often and as regularly as I can.

As he explained here, he also visited classrooms, not to formally observe teachers, but to support them. This principal believed that nurturing and supporting teachers was a major role of the team leaders.

To nurture and foster the teachers in their teams, that to me is their prime focus. I don’t believe you can instigate any change in teaching practice or standards through formal observations or formal attestations. I believe those team leaders – [and] they are quality teachers - they need to be in alongside and know what is happening in their team and be able to take a nurturing role in that. Make sure everything runs perfectly.

The team leaders were seen as being quality teachers. A coffee cup in the staffroom was emblazoned with the slogan, “There is no substitute for a good teacher.” The principal denied ownership of the cup but agreed it summed up nicely the whole ethos, or philosophy of how the teams tried to work.

The role of these quality teachers was to model “best practice” and school expectations by working alongside each other in the teams. A senior management team member and mathematics curriculum co-ordinator, amplified this point with an explanation of the particular supports that teachers had available for a new mathematics programme the school has recently begun implementing:

The teachers in the senior area will come and ask me, how do I teach this, or I can’t understand how this goes or will come and talk to me about it. Now, I’m not saying that I’m the fountain of all knowledge but I am the lead teacher and if I don’t understand it then I email the facilitator who worked with us in implementing this project. She is the outside person that supports us.
“Best practice” and school expectations were also modelled through the syndicate and planning teams. The effectiveness of this strategy was attested to by the principal in a recount of a recent, successful induction of two new staff members.

We had two new staff join [the school and same planning team this year] and we were a little concerned as to whether we had enough stability in there of expectations of high standards that these two will quickly get the school’s way. In fact it was very, very quick. It happened no problem and those teachers, very rapidly, were able to form as a team, get their benchmarks. I think there is a level, almost of osmosis, that goes on here. People see what’s happening around them and say, “Ah, right, this is what I’ve got to be doing here. This is the standard that is expected.”

Nevertheless, a revision of school documentation, including curriculum implementation plans, as suggested by ERO and to comply with National Education Guideline 2 (ii), was being undertaken. The principal was emphatic that the process should support the strong, and well developed team culture and collegial spirit. Documentation would only be created if required, and only to assist teachers in planning or classroom teaching.

The principal indicated that the implementation plans were intended to contain “nuts and bolts” information about the location of resources and standard practices such as times for testing. He did not expect the plans to replace the teams or team leaders in terms of curriculum implementation in practice.

I am keen that our “implementation plans” start from a practical basis. Things like - where do you find your School Journals? [If] you’re doing a running record where do you find that information? Mathematics, what do you use? We use ENP (Early Numeracy Project) and ANP (Advanced Numeracy Project), so when do you test, how often, what windows do you use?

Implementation plans were simply intended to elucidate current best practice at this school.

I’d like, when a new teacher comes, to be able to give them those “implementation plans” and say, “This is how we run things around here, keep it on your desk for the first few weeks because you’ll probably need to refer to it. Anything else? You’ll have a buddy teacher next door, you’ve got a team leader, and if you’re really stuck, the deputy principal and I tend to float over the top.”

Despite this, the content of some of the new implementation plans were prescriptive. For example, in science, the school had “a two-year cycle going through the stands and the content, probably a scheme, will remain.” For mathematics, because the school was using the Early Numeracy Project the principal did not see the need for a school scheme, and explained that he viewed this as a “default” scheme.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

In 2002, the teachers were all participating in a Ministry of Education contract for the introduction of the Early Numeracy Project and the Advanced Numeracy Project in mathematics. The mathematics curriculum implementation plan was, therefore, first for review.
The revised mathematics implementation plan, a slim 12-page document compared to its 26-page predecessor, set out the common expectations for mathematics at this school. These included the suggestion that mathematics would be taken at least four days per week; for example, Numeracy Project Assessment (NUMPA) testing was the basis of the programme and all children would be tested at the end of each year. A model for a mathematics lesson was included: the suggested sequence was 10-15 minutes of warm-up with basic facts or a “problem of the day”; 30-35 minutes of teaching and practice work related to the topic being studied; and 5-10 minutes of warm-down with sharing and/or independent tasks. This followed the Early Numeracy Project format.

In the new mathematics implementation plan, *Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1992) was cited as a reference for teachers. The school’s mathematics curriculum co-ordinator and external mathematics advisory staff were listed as key support personnel. The plan stated that classroom mathematics programmes were to be based around the five strands of the curriculum and would include the mathematical processes as detailed in the curriculum document. Number was to be given “priority weighting.” Learning outcomes would be based on the achievement objectives of the national curriculum and student progress monitored against them. Planning sheets listed the mathematical processes and achievement objectives for levels 1-4 of the curriculum, for each particular strand. Teachers would highlight those they intended to focus on, and then list their own starters, teaching points, extensions and assessment procedure(s).

The mathematics curriculum co-ordinator explained that the updated version of the mathematics implementation plan was to serve as a format for all other curriculum areas.

Planning was very much a collaborative activity, addressed at different levels by the various teams. Beginning at syndicate level, contexts for learning in each curriculum area were determined for an upcoming year, and then in more detail for a term. The school implementation informed this preliminary stage of the process by providing suggestions for topics or contexts for learning. Following from this yearly overview, planning teams met near the end of each term to formulate long-term plans for the next term. A school pro forma was used to list and timetable the contexts, or topics, to be covered in each essential learning area for the term. While led by a senior staff member, input from all participants was a strong part of the school culture. All team members contributed and offered suggestions. Once set, the long-term plans were elaborated on with unit plans for each topic or context, often formulated by the team.

For example, the planning teams met fortnightly and all unit-planning for science, social studies, technology, health and physical education, and the arts was completed as a group activity. Achievement objectives were selected from the curriculum documents, learning activities decided upon and assessment tasks agreed. The sharing of resources and ideas was a key feature of these meetings. Work in progress was also discussed, what was going well, what was not, what was working, what was not, suggestions for improvement and ideas to try were shared openly. Teacher planning for English including reading, and mathematics were usually undertaken on an individual basis but often discussed at team and buddy level. Resources and ideas for these areas were also shared. Various planning formats were used, some standardised, and others, the teacher’s own. Standardised forms included pro formas from school advisers, for example, like one for social studies where the strand(s), processes and settings were provided and only required highlighting while the
achievement objectives, specific learning outcomes, assessment criteria and strategy and learning activities were written in boxes provided. Standardised mathematics unit planning sheets that were adopted as a result of the school participation in ENP/ANP listed mathematical processes and achievement objectives for each particular strand, and teachers highlighted those that were appropriate before filling in their own starter activities, teaching points, extensions and assessment procedures in boxes provided. Some plans, especially those for units described as integrated, were completely written in longhand and varied considerably in what they included in terms of detail. The actual form or way that written planning developed was seen as less important than the team approach and sharing of resources and ideas - according to the principal.

Written planning was formally checked by senior staff, but the strong “team approach” to the planning process and collaborative school culture were seen as more effective ways of ensuring thorough preparation and effective implementation.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

The results of regular and ongoing assessment of children’s work informs planning and the grouping of children for teaching. The supportive and strong team approach was evident here as well. A senior teacher explained:

> On a monthly basis, in both the junior and middle teams, I collect the children’s reading levels and just have a look at, keep an eye on where they are. From there, I can pick up the at-risk children and put programmes in place, or make suggestions to teachers [about] things that we can do to support them to make the children’s achievement higher, if possible.

Identifying and meeting special needs was a strong focus of this assessment. Programmes that were in place included the provision of Individual Education Programmes (IEPs); use of Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs); class-based “booster groups”; and Reading Recovery.

The senior management team checked for a link between assessment and planning at the classroom level. The DP explained:

> When I looked at planning this time I wanted to see whether they were making any anecdotal notes or comments about individual children and actually meeting their needs, and whether that was then transferred over to the next teaching point for the day… and I did see that.

It seemed significant that classroom teachers and school management all emphasised this link between assessment and planning and teaching.

It was noted that the school was developing exemplars to make clear the school’s agreed expectations for student achievement, particularly to new teachers. Teams were working together to moderate these exemplars.

> We developed some exemplars last year in written language, transactional writing. We [firstly] looked at the English document, [and] read what transactional writing was. We decided we would get an example of our kids’ writing, a piece of transactional writing. We then had to put them into “below average,” “average,” and “above average” and from there we set out a criteria of what we believed was “below,” “average,” and “above.” We developed our own criteria. So everyone writes a report, we then said “okay! What do we consider ‘below,’ at, and ‘above?’” We developed a
criteria and it was really hard because a lot of us just looked at grammar; we didn’t look at the actual quality of the writing. We had to really think about that.

Exemplar moderation helped clarify and broaden the criteria that teachers used for assessment and reporting.

Written reports on each child’s progress and achievement were prepared for parents twice per year, one at mid-year and one at the end of the year. Parent interviews were held following the issue of the mid-year reports for parents to discuss their child’s report and school progress with the teacher if they wished. The format of, and what information was included in, the report was currently also under review.

In summary, this school was characterised by a culture of emphasis on good teaching and “best professional practice” modelled and supported by tight teamwork. Documentation, currently under review, was aimed at reflecting common expectations and supporting “best school practice.” Planning, teaching and assessment were mutually linked. Assessment information fed into programme provision.

Examples of teacher implementation

In-depth interviews were conducted with two classroom teachers. Each worked in a different area of the school, and each had a widely different level of teaching experience. Both, though, described experiences strikingly similar, and entirely consistent with the approaches outlined above by the principal and senior management team members.

Teacher 1

The first teacher had a Year 2 class and had taught for more than 30 years. She found the collegial approach to planning inclusive and supportive saying, “Towards the end of every term we have our team meeting. We get together and everyone gets input into what we’re going to do.”

Teacher 1 acknowledged the senior management and curriculum leaders as being very supportive:

I think as a staff we’re very collegially supported at this school and no-one has ever … no-one would ever refuse helping anyone else. Our syndicate leader is the assistant principal, and we have meetings with our larger syndicate, and if things come up there we chat about that and then we have our smaller teaching team meeting, which senior teacher [named] is the leader of, and she’s very approachable and everyone just sort of, well for want of a better word, “mucks in” together. We share a lot of resources. We don’t keep things to ourselves, not share them. I think we get support … very good support … from all the curriculum leaders too. I’m just trying to think. Senior teacher [named] is the maths one. The assistant principal does the English. If you go to them, if you want help, the curriculum leaders, they’re very supportive and they send you on the right path.

She particularly liked how, once contexts for learning were decided, resources and ideas were shared.

I think getting together and sharing ideas. That to me is a great help because everybody has a different way of looking at things and often there will be
things, someone will suggest something and say, “Oh that’s a really good idea, I wouldn’t have thought of that myself.” So sharing ideas helps a lot with planning and I like that. We get lots of ideas from others.

The availability of resources guided planning. Within the framework of the school implementation plans, when new areas were tackled, teachers worked together to find or prepare resources.

We have our manuals that go with each curriculum area [indicates school curriculum implementation plans] so that we cover the whole curriculum over a two-year period. We observe those and then we think now what resources do we have that we could use with some things like “grandparents’ day” coming up? We have that every second year, biannually, so we know we’re going to be doing that and we’ve often got resources that we’ve used before that we can recall. In the science and technology areas we’re often looking at new areas for us and so we all, sort of, pool our resources, everyone puts their ideas in and we share our resources.

Curriculum support materials such as the Making Sense of Science series were seen as a rich source of ideas for teaching.

In the case of those science books, sometimes we just have used those models, the models of those lessons that are given. I have found those booklets very useful and I wish they had some of those for other things. I find social studies particularly difficult for juniors, because most of the resources are quite advanced and you get sick of having to rethink and drop it down a peg or two to try and work something for your own little kids.

Similar resources would be welcome in other curriculum areas, for example, social studies that would be tailored specifically for younger children.

Teacher 1 tackled unit planning in a similar, collaborative manner. She indicated that she would capitalise on a community or current event as opportunities presented, and planned learning activities for her children in response to something “unexpected.”

We had something that came out of the blue which was [that] we had a visit from the “kids up the road” [with] puppets with disabilities. We had that on a Thursday. One of the other teachers said, “Look, I’d like us to do something about this.” So instead of doing the Fire unit we were going to do, we all did our own because it was such a rush thing. We just did our own planning for that unit. That can happen.

Unit planning

The unit plans for teacher 1 linked directly to the national curriculum documents:

We do take note of them [curriculum documents]. We don’t just have them there for show. We do use them and we’ll have, lots of us, have got highlighting in where we, or pencils down the side, pencil marks, things that we have discovered as we’ve used different topics. We look at the achievement objectives first, and as I said, we have to do certain objectives, odd and even years, so we have to fit round the achievement objective first, and then once we’ve done that we go to the resource room to see what topics we’ve got and what resources we have for that.
Achievement objectives were chosen from the curriculum documents to match the topics agreed on by the team for study. Teacher 1 viewed her written plans primarily as reminders of what she had to do:

*I need written things. I like to have plans there so that I can refer to them. I think if I didn’t have plans I’d probably think, “Oh, what are we going to do today?” I find them good as a guide, and keeping me up to the mark with what I’m supposed to be doing.*

The notion that there was a “school way,” or expectation, which her teaching should reflect was clearly evident in this quote, and consistent with her concern to be “up to the mark.”

The use of tracking sheets, to monitor coverage of the essential skills and achievement objectives in planning and teaching was outlined. These sheets provided a visual check mechanism and as the year progressed, gaps could be filled in. Areas not yet covered could be built into upcoming units.

Lack of time due to an overloaded curriculum was regarded as a hindrance to planning and teaching. “I think the curriculum is extremely full. I think we’re expected to do a lot in a day and I know the days just fly by because you’re so busy.”

An effective way of at least partially overcoming this problem was the use by teachers of what they termed “integrated units.” These are described:

*You’d probably have a main curriculum area that you were following, but like that science one where I brought in the social studies, the cultural differences of the way the Māori people see the seasons and the way we see the seasons. For the art, we did the seasons, we did different pictures for the seasons, and the science, of course, was the Earth and how the seasons follow cycles. The main focus was science, but we did writing too, so English came into it as well and we had the visual language with our art work and we wrote seasonal poems and we wrote “Which season am I?” and the kids gave three or four clues and they had to guess which season they were talking about. Those sorts of things. It’s trying to get in as many areas as you can over the four or the five-week period that you’re taking that unit, so that you’re covering a lot more than having to take them all separately.*

The organisation of learning programmes around a central theme and incorporating achievement objectives from a number of different learning areas was regarded as an efficient way of implementing the curriculum. Production of units of this type by the Ministry of Education to support the national curriculum documents would be welcome. “I think if we got some integrated unit plans that were models from the Ministry that would be a great help.”

Assessment strategies were discussed, and activities decided at the unit planning stage. A team discussion following a trip to the zoo was recounted to make the point:

*Everyone thought about it, and they thought “Now, what can we do to make sure that the children have got the idea?” We’d had our visit at the zoo so we thought “Well, we’ll carry on from there.” And what they had to do here was just simply match up the word with whatever the equivalent picture was. So we all did that same assessment.*

This assessment was used to check that children had learned what was intended.
Children’s achievement was recorded in various forms. Work samples were sometimes collected and kept in portfolios. Individual performance against achievement objectives was often recorded on a master sheet with notations indicating various levels such as “introduced,” “developing,” or “applying.” The children’s names were listed down the side of a sheet and achievement objectives assessed across the top. Teacher observation, or a set task could be used to determine a child’s level of attainment that would then be indicated on the sheet.

As with unit planning, teacher 1 had the freedom to plan and use her own assessment tasks if she wished. She described an assessment of her children’s science understanding as follows:

>> I did this one under my own steam because we’d had the science unit “Seasons” but I’d also integrated it with social studies, English and the arts, so I did my own. I didn’t talk to anyone else and for my own assessment, the children were doing display through speaking, writing and drawing, but they had some understanding of the cycle of the Earth and the seasonal changes and the effects of weather and climate (so) in the end, I didn’t use the text. I’ve got the sample here, these pictures [refers to samples of children’s work in assessment folder], and the kids had to put in what they thought the pictures showed and they had to give the reason. For instance, someone would have written, “I think this picture shows autumn, because the little girl was picking up fallen leaves.”

This choice of a more suitable text, and modifying an agreed activity to better suit the teaching and learning that the children had experienced both exemplify the “best practice” philosophy of the school, as described earlier by the principal.

In the classroom

An afternoon lesson in teacher 1’s class was observed. The lesson was part of the syndicate’s social studies unit on “grandparents.” The aim was in preparation for a trip the following day to a local museum. The Year 2 class came in after lunch and sat on a mat near the front of the room, the 11 boys and 16 girls mixing freely. The teacher sat on a low chair beside a small whiteboard facing the children. After greeting the class she marked the roll using a mixture of English and Māori greetings as she called each child’s name. The lesson proper began with the teacher asking who could remember their new topic of study. Several children responded quickly and enthusiastically, raising their hands. One was chosen to answer and responded “grandparents.” The teacher then continued, “Remember that tomorrow we are going on a trip to the museum and you will see lots of things there that people used many years ago. You will see clothes, tools and toys.” She then held up the book *The Toymaker* and asked who remembered the story. She told the children it was written by Martin Waddell and showed his name on the title page, and illustrated by Terry Milne. The story was then read to the class, the teacher stopping occasionally to tell about toys when she was a girl, and ask questions about the story. At the end of the story the teacher then said, “I’ll tell you what we are going to do now. We are going to look at the toys in this book [holding up another] and then we are going to go away and draw three toys on these specially folded pieces of paper.” She then showed a piece of paper that had been folded into three and explained it.
She then returned to the new book telling the children it was called *History from Objects: Toys*. She then asked what does the word history mean. Several children replied, “Things from long ago.” The teacher then proceeded to show each of the pages, talking briefly about each. At the end of the book the children were then asked to each name a toy that they had at home and these were written onto the whiteboard. The teacher emphasised differences in materials that the toys were made out of and operating mechanisms, for example, wood or metal wind-up toys in the past compared with plastic and electronic toys today. The children then moved off to draw their ideas of toys from the past, present and future.

In the 20-25 minutes they worked on this activity the teacher circulated and interacted with children on an individual basis. She helped some clarify differences in toys from different times and assisted others with the spelling of words. When complete the children regrouped back on the mat at the front of the room and to show and describe their work.

In terms of the curriculum implementation for this lesson was one of a sequence and was leading up to an education outside the classroom experience. The teacher, in selecting toys, utilised the children’s prior knowledge and interests to start the children thinking about what they might see at the museum. The story served to hook the children’s interest. The non-fiction text illustrated the types of toys the children might possibly see on their trip and began comparing and contrasting toys from different times. The activity allowed children time to consolidate their thoughts and the follow-up an opportunity to discuss and clarify them.

*Teacher 2*

Teacher 2 was in only her second year of teaching and was new to the school in 2002. She taught a Year 6 class of 12 boys and 10 girls. She described her personal vision as:

- I want my children to be able to achieve at a level that is comfortable for them,
- I want all my children to be able to feel that they are valued and feel that they are able to participate in everything that we do in our classroom.

That is, “her” children will achieve, feel valued, and participate in all classroom activities. The national curriculum documents were used to support this vision in two ways.

- It’s [sort of] a way we use them … sometimes we’ll go to the [curriculum] documents to find an objective that will fit what I want to do, and other times I’ll go to the document and find an objective and then find something that will fit the objective. I think it sort of works both ways.

Sometimes the curriculum documents provided specific detail as to what children should learn in relation to a predetermined learning context. At other times, they were taken as a starting point and a context found in which to embed a selected achievement objective.

In planning there was a collaborative and team-oriented approach, which was a preferred way of working for this teacher’s senior syndicate. The long-term planning process was virtually identical to that of teacher 2. “Long-term planning, we have a syndicate meeting and we work together basically.”
A significant proportion of unit planning was undertaken by “the team” teacher explained:

*We have team planning. For that, it’s generally done for topics, for science and social studies, [not so much] English and maths, although with ANP that’s a bit different and generally we do get together and try to do it for that. For English and maths and things like the spelling and handwriting it’s all done on our own, but for our topic work we generally have a planning meeting where we sit down and plan together.*

As a beginning teacher, this teacher still occasionally completed individual lesson plans, based on her larger unit plan. She cited an example:

*In music, I wanted my children to be able to find objects in our classroom that would make sound and then relate that to our science objective that was the properties of sound. I wrote what my objective was and then the activities that I wanted them to do. And of course we went off on a tangent and did all sorts of other things anyway.*

More detailed plans such as this, helped clarify and sequence her thinking, and contributed to improved learning opportunities for her children.

This teacher also followed the school practice of integrated planning. She described a unit she was currently teaching to help make clear her interpretation of the term:

*I find a topic that I want to teach, and then incorporate it into the curriculum areas. For example “Blast from the Past,” which is our music unit, and we’re looking at handwriting. I’m using the different descriptions of the styles of music as part of our handwriting and incorporating that through reading. I’ve looked up in a journal search on the computer and there’s a whole list of journal stories about music and musical instruments and that sort of thing. So I’ve incorporated the reading part and we’re looking at specific features of these texts ... to do with singing and music and that sort of thing. With our science, it’s the properties of sound and so I’ve introduced some different readers as well to do with science and how sounds travel and vibrations and things. We’ve worked as groups to make sounds vibrate and we’ve looked at all sorts of bits and pieces. We’ve listened to lots of different music. We’ve sung lots of different [songs] from through the different eras. What else have we done? Yeah, just, sort of, tried to incorporate, integrate all the different curriculum areas into the one topic, with the one context. That’s how I do it.*

In this way, she saw linking curriculum areas as being more meaningful to students than approaching each of the different learning areas individually. She explained:

*It’s more meaningful to the children too, because they don’t, sort of ... it’s not separated up into we’re doing maths now, and now we’re doing science, now we’re doing social studies. We’re just doing music and it’s bringing in all these other things.*

She viewed “integration” as offering an increased level of meaning to students through a seamless approach to the various curriculum areas.

When asked, “what purpose she saw her plans as serving?” this teacher gave an interesting answer. She saw them [plans] in the first instance as having an accountability, or compliance, purpose and yet she had never experienced an ERO review. She also saw them
as informing her teaching through providing a starting point and learning activity sequences to follow.

*It helps me focus on where I’m going and it just, sort of, helps me to have direction. In terms of the unit plan it gives me a starting point and it gives me following sequences that I can move through, or that I can just change totally and go off on another tangent.*

This teacher indicated that she felt confident enough to respond to children’s needs and interests and was comfortable in departing from her written plans if she thought it appropriate.

She felt very supported by both senior teachers and colleagues when it came to planning.

*I’ve got heaps of support. Senior teacher [named] is my tutor teacher and she’s wonderful. She’s also in charge of the Advanced Numeracy Project and she’s just absolutely amazing. She comes in and teaches lessons for you and she’ll also let you come in and observe her as well. I get heaps of support from the deputy principal as well for planning, and because we plan as a team it’s really good because you get lots of different ideas. In terms of things that I’ll plan myself, I’ll generally go to my senior teacher and she’ll help me out with anything I need. So I’ve got heaps of support.*

As this quote illustrates, senior staff collaborated with this teacher in the planning process. Good practice, or the “[named school] way” was also modelled with lessons taken in her class and opportunities provided for her to observe in their rooms. Work displayed on the classroom wall was from a recent lesson the DP had taken with the class on using De Bono’s six thinking hats and the roles people can take in groups, or to solve problems.

*[Named teacher] is wonderful because she’s our music specialist, and so for this unit she’s been great because we’ve had so many different ideas and her and I buddy up. I take the PE for our classes and she takes the music [in mine], which is really good because I’m learning from her with music and she’s learning with me for PE.*

Despite this teacher’s youth and relative inexperience she was recognised as having a worthwhile contribution to make and through the buddy system was given an opportunity to do so.

A lack of time was seen as one of the greatest hindrances to planning and teaching by this teacher. She cited the time required for tasks not directly related to planning and teaching as impinging on her work. She said, “Time. Not enough of it! Outside school commitments, parent interviews. Being sick. Unfortunately time is probably the ‘big’ one.”

*In the classroom:*

In an observed lesson, teacher 2’s class was working through a health and physical education unit, part of which focussed on examining roles other than playing in sports teams. In part of an afternoon lesson observed in her room the class was preparing for an upcoming event in which basketball teams would compete in a mini tournament in the school hall. The children had been divided into four groups, each responsible for the activities of: team coach, administrator, publicity manager, sponsorship manager, or uniform and equipment co-ordinator.
The 22 children were seated on a mat at the front of the classroom. The teacher sat in front, but to one side, near a small whiteboard on which was written the day’s date and class programme. After reading a couple of notices concerning after-school sports practices, the lesson proper began with the teacher telling the children that for the first part of the afternoon they would be working in their sports groups. She then briefly gave each group reminders like, “Sponsorship group, you need to remember…” and “Uniform group, don’t forget…” and sent all but one off to work in designated areas of the room. She then worked in more detail with the group remaining. She began, “We now need to really think about how we set up the hall for the festival day. If there is anything we need to buy we need to think of it today so I can get it.” As she spoke she sketched a hall floor plan on the whiteboard. Group members offered various suggestions and asked questions about what they could or could not do. Children’s thinking was stimulated with their questions often being answered by the teacher with another question. For example, “Can we use streamers?” “How would you attach them?” “Could we make a banner for each area using team colours?” “What colours would you need?”

After about five minutes of discussion this group was directed to, “Go away now and design what our hall will be like. Co-operate and work together as a group.” As the group moved off the teacher called another group and left the room with them to visit the school hall. The children left in the room remained on task and continued working in their groups. Several spoken to were able to clearly explain what they were doing and why.

After 25 minutes of independent work, the groups were all called back to the mat. Two children from each group were asked to report on what their group had achieved. Following completion of the group reports the children were directed off again and spent the second part of the afternoon finishing making musical instruments they had begun earlier as part of an associated study of the roles of people in a band.

To achieve objectives selected from the health and physical education curriculum document, the teacher used an authentic activity to provide the context for children to explore roles other than those of the players in a sports team. Planning allowed students to exercise some degree of responsibility. The children seemed to appreciate this and feel valued, as intended.

4.0 Discussion of findings

The most striking feature of this case study was the consistency between the views propounded by the school management, curriculum and various team leaders, and the teachers interviewed. All participants in the study emphasised: a team approach to planning, collegiality and the sharing of ideas and resources, and a common understanding of a “school way.” Within that “school way” though there was the flexibility to allow teachers to make changes of their own, and cater for the interests of their children. Documentation supported, rather than determined, practice. What was described during interviews was evident in teachers’ planning and assessment folders and demonstrated in classrooms.
5.0 Summary

- There was a demonstrated connection and linkage between national curriculum documents, school policies and documents, syndicates and teachers, and what occurred in classrooms.

- There were clear policy lines and a high degree of conformity through whole-staff and syndicate functions, with encouragement from the principal for teachers to use their own particular teaching and learning approaches in their classrooms.

- There were, nevertheless, issues that need further investigation, for example, feelings among some teachers that the school programme was too full (or even over full) and that there was never enough time to study everything in sufficient depth. Integrated units had been developed as a way of countering this situation.
CP6: A contributing primary school in a large town

1.0 Description
This contributing primary school (Years 1-6), was situated in a large town. It had a roll of 175 and a teaching staff of 13. Its ethnic composition was Māori 36%; Pakeha 57%; Pasifika 2%; Asian 1%; and Other 4%. The gender composition was 54% boys and 46% girls and the decile rating was three. A feature of the school was the mainstreaming of 12 children from a recently closed, attached, special unit for students with disabilities. Classes were composite groups, usually comprising pupils from two consecutive Year levels. Of the 13 teaching staff, 10 had more than 15 years of experience each, while three others were beginning teachers.

The school’s most recent ERO report, (2000), described a well managed and delivered national curriculum. It stated, “Up-to-date implementation plans were available in all essential learning areas making provision for all achievement objectives of all strands to be taught over each two-year period.” According to the report, detailed long-term plans clearly stated how individual teachers would implement the curriculum and a strong emphasis on teaching essential skills and processes was evident in curriculum documentation and practice. Teachers’ unit plans displayed a high level of curriculum integration organised around appropriate achievement objectives. Planning and curriculum delivery responsibilities were documented in both the junior and senior syndicates.

Since the time of that report, several significant changes have occurred at the school. A new principal and deputy principal (DP) have been appointed, with staff now more cognizant of the implications of amendments to the National Administration Guidelines, published in late 1999. Believing, “There’s a difference between a bulldozer and a broom!” the new principal has not set about to make immediate, wholesale changes, but had, nevertheless, begun working with her senior management team and staff to effect changes that would better reflect her philosophy and the revised NAGs. A comprehensive review of the school’s curriculum policies and implementation plans was part of this and, at present, is in its initial stages. The principal explained:

Currently we have a policy for every curriculum area and within curriculum areas there are policies within policies. What I am aiming for is one generic curriculum delivery policy, one that will set out expectations for curriculum delivery so that we’ve got some sort of consistency across our school.

2.0 School systems
A rationalisation of curriculum delivery policy would, the principal envisaged, help achieve a consistency of approach throughout the school, something that had been lost in recent years. The revised NAG’s emphasis on numeracy and literacy would be embodied, along with the school’s own preferred approaches to planning and assessment. The principal continued:

Within it, I hope to be able to reflect what’s important to us at this school and how we’re going to have our focus on numeracy and literacy while still bringing in the other curriculum areas as required under NAG 1. Our preferred approaches to teaching and approaches to assessment will be included within that [and] an acknowledgement of learning styles of kids. All
those sorts of things I want reflected within our curriculum delivery policy which will lead on to curriculum implementation planning.

It was believed that the new policy would inform curriculum implementation plans, which would, in turn, show what the principal thought were of the utmost importance for the pupils of the school:

I want them to have a solid base in literacy, numeracy and the breadth of the essential skills. I believe that literacy is a foundation for absolutely everything and leads into so much of what we do in life and success in life, so, therefore, I believe that they have to be proficient in those skills. I want our school curriculum to try and assist kids to develop into being the best that they can be so they can survive out there beyond school.

As well as a heightened focus on numeracy and literacy, the principal wanted to see the essential skills given increased prominence in curriculum delivery planning. She felt curriculum implementation was based largely on the achievement objectives and was working with senior staff towards taking a different, more essential skills-orientated approach.

I think curriculum implementation is still very much based around achievement objectives, and I believe that essential skills should be at the top. I had a really interesting talk with my senior team just last Friday about what is long-term planning? What should a long-term plan show? How can we reflect the essential skills better?

The principal’s senior management team, made up of the DP who led the senior syndicate and the assistant principal (AP) who led the junior syndicate, were seen as key players in bringing about the desired changes to school culture and established procedures. Current practice was driven through the syndicates, determined by the syndicate leaders. In addition to discussions on planning, for example, the one mentioned above, the principal had required the management team to reflect on what they saw as their respective leadership roles and had asked them to provide a written statement that would be used in the formulation of revised job descriptions. The purpose of the exercise was two-fold, being to encourage meta-analysis of what their responsibilities as leaders involved and to promote ownership of delegated tasks.

With a view to developing a pro forma for other curriculum implementation plans, the DP was asked to review the existing science implementation plan and draft an update. She was science curriculum co-ordinator and had undertaken recent personal professional development in science at the nearest university. The process began with syndicates asked to comment on what they liked and disliked about the existing plan, what was useful, and what was no longer a reflection of current practice. A focus group of interested teachers then met to collate and compare the findings of the two syndicates. Working from both Governing and Managing and Ka Pai School and her university course material, she [the DP] produced a new one-page document that was presented to the whole staff for consideration.

Its layout was seen as a possible pro forma for all curriculum area implementation plans to follow. It contained sections detailing: focus for learners, school organisation; assessment and evaluation; programme of learning; resources; references and budget.
At first presentation of the draft to staff, considerable discussion centred around the statement:

* A two-year cycle of coverage of the achievement objectives outlined in the SINZC document and linked to the essential skills and other essential learning areas will be developed in collaboration with staff.

Exactly how this would be achieved, and whether such an approach was in keeping with the desire to move to an essential skills-driven curriculum was debated at length. At the time of this fieldwork, the issue was not resolved.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

At the time of the school visit, curriculum implementation was based on a combination of the old policies and implementation plans, and established practice in each of the syndicates. Contexts for learning were determined at syndicate level. Pupil needs, teacher professional judgment, the school’s physical location and local interest all interplayed to guide planning for learning opportunities. The AP explained that contexts were often drawn from the local environment and/or current events:

* We’ve developed our own policy document and listed topics of study... sometimes they come from what’s going on around us. ... They’re not always in the documents but most times it’s been written with our environment, you know, what’s available around here, or whatever area of the curriculum we’re looking at... place(s) that we perhaps can go and visit.

It was stated that contexts from the local environment met student needs more effectively:

* We look at our children and what they, sort of, need, because it’s no use putting city things with our children. We’ll do a farm study because that’s where we live and it might be a dairy farm or a sheep farm or even a local horse establishment because that’s what’s here and so you make full use of what’s in your own environment first and then go further field.

Topics of study were selected from the curriculum document on the basis of local relevance:

* But then sometimes the topics of study are actually taken from the curriculum document too. If you look at the science one it gives a few ideas of what should be taken at level 1, or level 2 or level 3 and we’ll put those into our documentation plan. For example, the I think it’s the Earth science thing where we’ve got several quarries around here - we can actually - if we can get past the other rigmarole of OSH - we can actually go and see some of those.

She also explained that teachers actively canvassed the local environment for events to meet particular needs, for example, the school went to the movie “Shrek” as part of a unit on visual language.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

Long-term plans were developed collaboratively within each syndicate. The junior syndicate, led by the AP, also undertook some unit planning together as a team. A memo issued to syndicate members at the start of the year specifically designated “shared planning and sharing ideas” were two proposed activities the weekly syndicate meeting would be
used for [fieldnotes]. Some unit planning was also undertaken together by the team in the senior school, but more often in two sub-groups rather than the syndicate as a whole. The DP worked closely with a first-year teacher while a second experienced teacher tutored a beginning teacher in her second year.

Teacher planning was sighted and approved by the members of the senior management team through their roles as syndicate leaders. Neither team leader has any scheduled release time to observe or work alongside other teachers. Effective implementation of programmes was partially left to professional trust:

I don’t do a lot of classroom observation because I don’t get any release time to do that, and also I don’t feel like I need to be checking up on teachers all the time. I think there’s a basic feeling of trust and it’s really important.

Syndicate assemblies, where children were able to share and talk about their work, were seen as an effective way of monitoring curriculum implementation. The DP explained:

On Wednesday afternoons we have our senior syndicate assembly and the children get to share the work that they’ve done. That’s a good way to keep up with what’s happening in classrooms because they enjoy showing what they’re producing and you see what’s happening in the classrooms that way.

This had the added advantage of capitalising on student pride in sharing their work. The AP pointed out that simply looking in classrooms, or asking a child to show their book, when walking around on duty could be equally effective. Both the junior and senior syndicates used their meetings to discuss assessment strategies and results.

Each syndicate meeting we like to look at a different area, for example, recently we all brought some writing samples; a “good,” a “medium,” and a “not-achieving” sample to our syndicate meeting and we compared and set some criteria together about as to what we thought quality of work would be. We did that with our written language as well and also looked at the different ways that we’d assessed the written language samples that we brought. Everybody had different ideas and it was really good to share those.

These moderation sessions served a dual purpose. They were seen as both a way of reviewing best practice and monitoring curriculum implementation.

Assessment for Better Learning

The principal saw the effective use of assessment being the key to standardising school practice and improving teaching and learning. Deciding on, and then making clear what assessment data should be collected and then how that information should be used to improve children’s learning was one of the first areas for review.

When I came in last year, I looked for historical data on assessment. The only thing I could find was a few PATs graphs that really didn’t tell me a lot, and six-year net information, and so I was very aware that to do curriculum review we had to have an idea of where our kids were performing so we sat down as a staff and started with numeracy and literacy.

The establishment of a baseline from which to undertake curriculum review was a first priority, so beginning with literacy and numeracy the whole staff worked to compile an achievement profile for the school:
We looked at spelling and we took the Peter’s test and that was horrendous. We did PATs listening, reading comprehension and vocabulary, and we did a basic facts assessment. We analysed all that information school-wide and reported to the board, we reported to staff and used that to actually formalise the next steps for our school.

Assessment practices varied considerably across the school, so as a first step towards establishing a common practice, the principal introduced a school cumulative record card. Initially, staff worked together as a whole to collect and record information on reading:

We also had no common assessment practice in place so we decided that we were going to try our own version of a cumulative record card. We agreed to do PATs because that’s the only standardised achievement stuff. We did running records so I collected the independent reading age of all the kids from the teachers and we used PM Benchmark kit to try and standardise that as much as we can.

In an effort to standardise school practice, there was a focus on “reading running records,” in particular, how they were taken and then how the information they produced was used.

We’ve acknowledged that we still need to look at running records as a staff. How are we taking them? How are we coding them? What are we looking for? How can we make sure that what we’re doing is actually giving us a standardised measure? How are we using the results, etc? The whole picture of running records in our school!

Mathematics also came under the spotlight, and a standardised test provided baseline data about the level(s) at which children were working:

We used the Auckland diagnostic assessment for number and measurement, which gives you a level for kids. So we looked at where they were - level 1, 2, or 3 - and we realised from doing that that we were too broadband in the way that we analysed those results, so we had to refine that even further. For example, I said it was “okay” for a kid at Year 3 to be working at either level 1 or level 2, which is fine if you have a look at the way the curriculum bands are shown, but they should be towards the end of level 1 if they’re in Year 3, whereas we accepted level 1. So we actually had to break that down to an “early,” [and] “mid,” [and] “end” to try and get a better picture of where our kids are.

The analysis of the data collected allowed staff to immediately recognise that they were too broad in the attainment levels previously accepted as appropriate for children in different class groups. Expectations could be higher and ratings in future more accurate. Along with the results of several other standardised tests, the information collected was used to report to the Board of Trustees and formalise the next steps for improving practice and student achievement at this school.

Future development of this initiative will see certain tests repeated and results compared to check on the effectiveness of learning programmes:

The running records are going to be done three times a year and comparisons drawn, and the other ones are going to be done again at the end of the year, just to have a look at whether we’ve made any significant change.
3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

Examples of teacher implementation

In-depth interviews were conducted with two classroom teachers. Each worked in a different area of the school, and each had a different level of teaching experience to the other.

**Teacher 1**

Teacher 1 had a Year 1-2 class and had been teaching for several years after returning from a break of several years. She liked the revised focus of the NAGs on numeracy and literacy, as she believed these were the most important learning areas for her young pupils. She saw the role of other curriculum areas as supplementary, or supportive, of her pupils gaining a solid grounding in these areas:

*I think for the new entrants, and especially my first year children who really haven’t been at school all year, I think they should be doing lots of language units. That’s what I really think is really important... I’d sooner do language units and then if science and social studies and all the other things, and health, come out of them, that’s fine.*

She questioned the approach of attempting to cover every objective in every curriculum area over a two-year period, believing it was not always meaningful and appropriate for junior children:

*If we can get away from, well we’ve been really tied into doing you know you’ve got to cover these objectives over two years and fitting in things ... I’ve got little children, suitable for their age, so that we’re actually doing studies that are not too above them.*

It appeared that providing a meaningful, age-appropriate programme was more of a key concern for teacher 1. She commented that she would like the curricula to provide objectives that were “real for children” in this regard.

Teacher 1 described a long-term planning approach consistent with that outlined by the senior management team. This included reference to school policies, syndicate members discussing what had been covered, ideas for contexts, and the need to share equipment. Following the syndicate long-term planning sessions, she used the curriculum documents to identify achievement objectives, and develop learning outcomes and activities. She was of the opinion that her planning linked directly to the national curriculum documents through the school’s current policy, in that she worked towards covering the topics and achievement objectives specified over a two-year period:

*We have school policies, we have been very linked into doing if you’re Year 1 or Year 2, or even or odd years - what topics you take to a certain degree - and that works. That’s so it’s not overlapping, so there has been a link through there, basically through topics, really through school policy and things that you’re going to cover.*

In terms of efficiency, teacher 1 commented on a mathematics planning sheet that listed the curriculum achievement objectives; she explained that she circled those objectives on the sheet which she was using for a particular unit. It appeared that this teacher valued prepared planning sheets because they saved her from having to “re-invent the wheel.” She
did, however, comment on several problem areas including the lack of space for recording learning experiences. Also for mathematics, she reported that she sometimes used the school-provided text as a default plan. Other areas identified were shortcomings in the text, including the relevance of some of the activities for her students. The order of the content did not always match with strands in the document and the amount of work in the book was too great to be covered:

I’m finding, I’m actually going away, I’m still doing, using them [the textbook] but I’m going away from some of their activities and putting in things that I think are more relevant... they weren’t always in an area that it actually says in the curriculum they would seem to be in different places, like I’ve just been doing patterning but I didn’t do symmetrical patterns ... I’m doing that later. I don’t do everything it says because it just can’t get covered. So, yeah, I just, sort of, change from that.

As the quote suggests, this teacher exercised considerable professional judgment of her own accord to adapt what resources she had access to. Although she wondered about the need to produce detailed written plans, she still found having some form of written outline both kept her focused and ensured that the appropriate materials were available for her children:

I need a unit plan or otherwise I waffle. Sometimes I don’t really think I need to. I think I’m doing it because I have to... but I do need my plan especially like things so I can actually go back and think, “Now what books have we used for reading?” I do need that so I know what I have to actually get ready you know. It’s no good arriving at a lesson and thinking gosh I should have done that last night!

More detailed guides were needed when she was less familiar with the content of the learning area being taught:

I do need my unit plan... especially in social studies and science so I’m actually teaching concrete things and progressing them through and covering what I have to cover. Health sometimes...

Rather than record in detail everything to cover in a day or week, she identified a range of skills to cover from her long-term plan, and then taught to the objectives as opportunities arose:

Reading, I don’t actually put in all the skills I’m going to teach in my daily work plan because it often comes from reading as you’re doing it. A lot of things are done on the run. I mean I have certain skills I’m going to teach over the term and I make sure I do them. Shared book or things like that from writing, news writing ... I make sure I incorporate them, but a lot of the things just come up, you teach when they’re needed.

Again, she exercised considerable professional knowledge and curriculum control, adapting and shaping curriculum content to student interests as they arose. In support of this approach, she asserted that there needed to be space for her to respond to “things that crop up”:

You’ve still got to be flexible because other things crop up, so I won’t say it always completely ties in and you know when we do something as a school.

For this teacher there were plusses and minuses to collaborative and syndicate-based planning. The advantages included encouragement to complete planning tasks. She
mentioned one colleague in terms of this advantage in that the colleague “gets on and gets it done and she makes you get it done.” Working with colleagues and having shared planning allowed her “do things that I would never have done.” However, she expressed concern that, in contrast to her previous experience, shared and collaborative planning contributed to a lack of individuality in teaching programmes, “Sometimes I feel now we’re doing nearly everything all the same now and there’s no individuality.” She expressed a desire of often preferring to “do what I would like to do,” that is, “to do topics you feel are more appropriate for your class,” while still working within the framework of school policy.

This teacher also made use of some commercially produced units and found them useful, “I’m using a Berkley unit at the moment, on birthdays, and I’m finding that really good.” There was evidence that she evaluated and adapted this type of pre-prepared material to suit the needs of her younger children, but found it a useful source of “background information.” She stressed that readiness for learning was an important consideration and this was not always met by externally prepared plans. Mathematics in particular required adaptation based on professional judgment and knowledge of the needs and prior learning of her children.

I get the maths out and I work through that. I don’t always do the things like capacity when they say to do it because we do it in summer when it’s warm. We do switch things round to suit us, some things like money and measurement and length ... some of those things I feel you’ve got to take at a different time of the year after you’ve done some number things, so the kids are actually recognising numbers and counting, it’s no use doing them before. You’ve got to wait and do things in the right order and things like that.

This teacher identified and discussed a number of things she felt hindered her planning and teaching. She spoke of a “lack of time” but went on to explain how this was really a change in the way time was spent now compared to how she remembered things in the past. Time previously spent on preparing work was increasingly being spent on monitoring and recording children’s progress:

I think that’s what I’ve noticed since I’ve come back teaching. I’m finding now that there’s so many other things to be done, doing your monitoring at the end of sessions and writing it up and putting it in folders... years ago we probably spent as much time but we were actually making activities for the classroom.

The school’s new cumulative record cards were seen as hopefully reducing the amount of time required for the recording of assessment information. Teacher 1 commented, “We’re not doing quite so many profile sheets now.”

An increase in the number of meetings to be attended was also singled out as taking valuable time away from lesson preparation. While she acknowledged the importance of these meetings she still lamented the time they took away from classroom preparation and would be more comfortable in herself finding resources and ensuring she was properly prepared for upcoming lessons.

Her experience and confidence in using professional judgment were apparent in her description of assessing student achievement against her planned learning objectives. She did not see a need to formally assess everything, employed a range of methods depending on the situation and often just mentally noted observations during lessons:
I don’t always [formally] assess everything. I mean a lot of it’s done in your head and on the run … it depends what it is I have to do. At times I give them, say, a worksheet activity and I choose an objective and mark it and record it and put it in their folder. [Some] things you can only find out really by asking them orally… and a lot of things do have to be done individually. But often just mental note of things on the run as you’re taking lessons is all you need.

Assessments appropriate to the situation were used and teacher observation was often regarded as the most effective for the situation.

In the classroom
An afternoon lesson in teacher 1’s Year 1-2 class centred on comparing birthday celebrations in Asia and New Zealand. It was part of a social studies unit with focus on the Culture and Heritage strand of the curriculum.

Following return from lunch, the children (only nine initially as the other 11 children were at Māori) sat on the mat at the front of the room and read informally. The next phase of the lesson was a discussion of a story about cultural practices such as eating with chopsticks and games from different countries.

The concluding part of this lesson then involved the children being asked to recall and help the teacher write the rules of the game on the whiteboard.

The lesson was one from a commercially produced unit that the teacher had adapted for use with her class. An authentic activity was used to give children experience of an activity from a culture other than their own within the meaningful context of a birthday celebration. This was discussed so that similarities and differences between children’s lives in different cultural settings were highlighted and made clear to the learners.

Teacher 2
Teacher 2 was a provisionally registered teacher in her second year. She was currently teaching a Year 5-6 composite class after last year working with younger children. When asked about the national curriculum documents she replied that she regarded the documents as a guide:

I think as a beginning teacher I need guidelines as to where I’m supposed to be going, and so at this stage I don’t know that I actually see it for the students, I see it more for me.

She went on to comment that she found the mathematics document helpful, but the science and technology ones less so.

I like the maths document… for a person who’s not a maths person it sets it out in very simple objectives what my students are expected to learn. The most unhelpful? I mean technology is very difficult to understand… I find it very difficult to understand what they really want. And science is a little bit like that, too, some of it is not quite as helpful.

However, she often found it difficult to fit her ideas for contexts with the documents. In her view, some of the best learning came from these contexts and children’s ideas.
I find things that I want to do - like the Hobbits you know. And it was a brilliant idea - but boy, trying to make it fit in! I mean in the end I just gave up and did it anyway... sometimes the best ideas I just can’t fit in to those documents! I just can’t fit them in any more and they turn out to be the best, the best learning - and kids come to school and they brought more information and they’ll have done other neat things.

The tension the teacher felt between what constituted quality learning experiences for her children and what she believed the curriculum demanded was strongly evident in her description of the long-term planning process:

Unit plans are the things I struggle with the most. You make them up and get into them and all of a sudden you’re off on this other tangent and you end up doing much better things. I listen to what the children want to do.

While she was happy to accommodate children’s interests, she was unsure how to reconcile these with her pre-prepared written planning and wondered whether the “plans” should actually be written retrospectively.

This teacher’s main driver for curriculum planning appeared to be programmes or learning experiences that were offered to the school, as opposed to the curriculum framework.

The syndicate gets together and gathers up all the visiting things that are happening in the school, they get penned in first. For example, we use the Newspapers in Education (NIE) papers. The information’s there, fine! But it doesn’t fit in to the curriculum as well as it could do. Then it’s just a matter of choosing perhaps two or three different topics, like Commonwealth Games, you know that will get plugged in, just seeing what’s happening around the world or around New Zealand.

Teacher 2 seemed comfortable with structuring learning experiences around current events or specialist resources but showed concern about the depth of teacher knowledge this demanded:

This is the problem I have with the curriculum - if you have no knowledge about a particular aspect that they want you teach at a stage, then you really struggle to pull it off. I mean you can fake it but even with all the resources and what not, if you just haven’t got that knowledge as a person then how are you supposed to put that across to a class - full of children? I suppose that will come with experience.

She anticipated that greater knowledge would come with experience.

In the absence of a standard, school-based unit pro forma, this teacher used her own unit format based on what she was shown at university. She also had her own mental model that she endeavoured to follow for individual lessons. When asked whether there was a school requirement for her, as a beginning teacher, to generate detailed lesson plans, she made it clear that there was no requirement but felt there should be. She went on to describe how her plans linked to the curriculum documents:

I really do try to do that. Each plan is linked with a major objective, for example, my current unit, “Pesky Possums” I’ve linked it to the science curriculum and the objectives that I want. In my assessments, I link back to the objectives that I was trying to do. My knowledge of curriculum documents, I still have to use them, I still have to go in and hunt out what I’m looking for. I
would have thought by now I would have known those documents inside out, but I don’t.

The teacher showed a clear understanding of the process by which unit plans were linked to the New Zealand curriculum and not only used the curriculum for planning but also for formulating assessments. She did however express her frustration at the amount of time it was taking to feel familiar with the detail of the curriculum documents. She hoped that the new school curriculum implementation plans would aid in this process.

Teacher 2 identified being “able to get some really good ideas” as being pivotal for planning. She said, “[When] I find a topic that’s going to interest myself and the students, being able to find resources is important.” She looked in all of the conventional places such as the school library and resource room, and public libraries. She also found the Internet particularly useful.

When asked about what hindered her planning, she remarked that some school programmes impacted negatively on her class programme.

I know that schools have to offer music and they have to offer small interest groups to retain the children in school, but I find losing six children out of my class two or three times a week - different kids each time - destroys the flow of planned lessons.

She also found lack of time difficult and admitted to struggling to cover all the objectives in the curriculum documents in the time available:

We are told in maybe two or three years from now we have to cover them, if we are covering them over three years then that’s okay, but I think perhaps I’m still trying to do too much, trying to fit too much in.

In her view, the lack of time precluded her from providing a balanced programme that gave equal time to all curriculum areas. In practice, numeracy and literacy demanded most of the available time and left little for all the other areas.

When assessing student achievement against planned learning objectives, teacher 2 reiterated a clear understanding of the process of basing assessment tasks on achievement objectives directly from the curriculum:

I always try, when we are doing topics, to link assessment tasks directly to the curriculum so each of my assessments that are recorded in our profile books have got the objective that I’ve set out to achieve beside it.

It seemed, however, that teacher 2 was still searching for a template that suited all curriculum areas. Having said this though, she acknowledged that the English curriculum was, for her, the hardest to work from, especially the complex nature of language and the appearance of unexpected learning outcomes within lessons, outcomes that she had neither planned to teach or assess. She was unsure how to validate these outcomes.

Another line of questions put to teacher 2 probed the types of assessment information she collected. She described newly introduced cumulative record books used by the school for recording student information, but did not comment on what information was recorded. She did, however, comment on keeping annotated samples of children’s work herself.
She commented that, as a parent herself, she would find such evidence/material worthwhile.

*In the classroom:*

A morning lesson in the classroom was a mathematics group of 24 children from throughout the senior syndicate, ability-grouped, working at level 2b (the top half of level 2) and 3a (the lower half of level 3) of the national curriculum.

To begin, half of the children sat at desks and the other half on the floor. All were quiet and worked on problems off an overhead projector into the back of their exercise books. The instruction read, “Use will, might or won’t to fill the spaces.” After two minutes children all returned to sit at desks and the teacher asked for answers. For example, Number 1: Kiwi __________ go to the beach. Children offered answers and the teacher asked for reasons. Assumptions about the meaning of the word “kiwi” in that particular context were discussed. As discussion developed around each example children were given a chance to change their answers if they wished. Children marked their own work as they went.

Following completion of this section, children turned to the front of their books and were reminded to write the day’s date. The teacher recapped the previous day’s work on probability and led into what they would be doing that day. The task was directly from *National Curriculum Mathematics* (Caxton Educational, 2000) level 2, Book 2 p. 351. Children were asked to give one negative, one positive and one “maybe” statement. They were to write each on a piece of paper provided, discuss with their neighbour and arrange onto a continuum from “yes,” to “no.” Children set to work, and the teacher organised three or four children without partners and then moved around the room working with children, encouraging and assisting.

After about five minutes the children were called back to attention and the teacher checked that they had all clearly understood what they were to have been doing, asked them to double-check their work, and gave two more minutes to finish off. Several minutes later they were called to attention again and directed to form two large groups and negotiate the re-organisation of all their sentences into one continuum for the group. The teacher again moved between the groups checking and assisting. Again, after about five minutes a reader from each group was nominated to read out each statement on their continuum. Much discussion on each ensued with the teacher reinforcing how often statements could be interpreted in different ways, by different people. When both groups had finished, they were asked what they had learned and one child responded, “You can sometimes use the words positive and negative instead of ‘yes,’ and ‘no’.” Teacher 2 followed up by asking, “Which word meant which?” And the same child replied, “Positive means ‘yes’.”

The children were then directed to spend 10 minutes working quietly and independently completing some exercises from their textbooks they had begun the day before. One group worked from *National Curriculum Mathematics* level 2 – Book 2, p. 350 and a second group from level 3 – Book 1, p. 312.

The lesson concluded with the teacher asking the children to think overnight about games they had played that were unfair, and how they could describe the chances of winning those
games using the statements “good chance,” “even chance,” or “poor chance.” They were also asked to think about examples of games adults played that they had a “poor” chance of winning, but still continued to play.

The lesson was from a unit on probability. It was structured and followed a recognised format beginning with maintenance, moving into the body of the topic, included practice and consolidation and ended with some advance preparation for the following lesson. The activity used in the main body of the lesson and the practice work came directly from the text *National Curriculum Mathematics*. The senior syndicate used this series of textbooks as a major resource for mathematics teaching.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This school was in the process of revising its curriculum implementation plans and other related documentation. The approaches to curriculum implementation were based on a combination of established syndicate practice and aspects of existing documentation. The review gave the principal and senior staff the opportunity to examine current practice, effect changes where they were deemed necessary and standardise procedures across the junior and senior syndicates. Teachers were seeking some common approaches to planning and assessment. What was described during interviews was evident in teachers’ planning and assessment folders, and was demonstrated in classrooms.

5.0 Summary

- Syndicate structure in this school regulated long-term planning, assessment and moderation.
- The attempts to cover all of the achievement objectives at appropriate levels had stimulated the integration of curricula into topic approaches to unit planning.
- There was a move to standardising assessment and recording practices and curriculum policies under the leadership of a newly appointed principal at this school.
- The principal was keen for teachers to emphasise the essential skills over meeting achievement objectives across the school.

CP7: A large rural contributing primary school

1.0 Description

This decile 9, contributing (Year 1-6) school was on the outskirts of a large regional town. The student population of around 218 was made up of 5% Māori and 95% Pakeha. Twelve teachers and classrooms were in operation, the school principal having been at the school for a number of years. The school environment was attractive and well laid out with new building renovations in the last few years to cope with the growing number of children. ERO, in their latest report, commented that these developments “enhanced the teaching and learning facilities available at the school.” A strong community involvement and pride in the development and maintenance of the school environment was also highlighted. A significant number of children travelled to the school each day from the nearby town, either by bus or car.
ERO also commended the principal on his strong leadership and the senior management team for their collective contribution to the development of a team culture within the school. The staff were described as, “A strong team of committed and hardworking teachers who effectively provide for the learning needs of the students.”

The principal explained that he believed it was important that the school encouraged individuals and helped the development of all children, “to reach their full potential” through not only the curriculum but also the essential skills, “and the promotion of some good old-fashioned values and attitudes.” He emphasised that he saw the curriculum as being only one small part of what they were aspiring to achieve with their students. Rather, he wanted to develop the children, “in a balanced way both academically, socially and attitudinally.” He went on to stress that he believed that children leaving his school were generally well rounded individuals, many having achieved well in the world. The latest ERO report appeared to support the principal’s focus, stating that there was a positive school tone and culture, “where individual students were valued, respected, and challenged in their learning.”

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management team consisted of the principal, the deputy principal (DP) and the assistant principal (AP). The DP and AP were responsible for overseeing and monitoring the management of the curriculum policy, planning and assessment, and classroom implementation. As well as these roles, the DP and AP were also curriculum leaders. Other staff led teams in curriculum areas also. Management met every week and there were also syndicate and staff meetings each week. The principal stated that it was through the senior management meetings that school curriculum policies and practices were discussed. Any new procedures or reminders about requirements were dealt with through syndicate meetings, which the AP and DP led. As the DP explained:

> It’s our role to make sure it’s all happening. If it’s policy in the school, then we have to make sure that everybody’s following it. We should be instrumental in guiding staff and consulting with them, bringing them “on board” so that we are all “rowing the same boat.”

Staff opted into a curriculum team through interest and expertise. The senior management stated that they had undergone considerable professional development (PD) in their areas of curriculum responsibility and were continuing to do so. They also were being encouraged to undertake university study in the area of leadership and management and had been helped financially by the school to achieve this. Curriculum teams were responsible for: the development and review of policies relating to their specific area; professional development for staff when relevant; and the budget such as resource maintenance and purchase. When developing or reviewing a policy, curriculum teams generally prepared a draft, which was shared with staff and senior management who then took it away and refined it before presentation to the Board of Trustees. Curriculum groups met regularly with more frequent meetings being scheduled when there was a major initiative underway (such as the introduction of a new programme). Currently, four members of staff were involved in a Ministry of Education arts curriculum professional development contract. This meant that the leader and three other team members had been attending PD workshops and now had responsibility for sharing their expertise with the rest of the staff during staff
meetings. They were also reviewing the arts curriculum policy and were going to present their ideas to senior management and staff.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

There was strong support for professional development across the curriculum in this school. The principal stressed the importance of promoting and encouraging staff to undergo PD in order to help create a “shared learning community within the school.” He added that his own professional development was important to him and that he attended workshops with his staff whenever he was able. However, he admitted that the pressures of his job meant that he was unable to be “the curriculum expert” that some believed principals should be:

*I know principals are supposed to be able to walk on water, but realistically you simply can’t stay up-to-date with everything that’s happening, so it’s really important that there is a teamwork culture where everyone works together and everyone shares.*

Interviews with team leaders indicated that they had many opportunities to attend professional development courses, to undertake academic qualifications, and to attend conferences. They stated that the principal was very supportive of their “wants and desires” in this area, as was the Board of Trustees. Whole-school professional development also took place, particularly when new initiatives or programmes were being implemented such as the arts curriculum, or the Ministry of Education Early Numeracy Project and Advanced Numeracy Project development contracts that the school was about to embark on. The school brought in outside consultants to provide professional development when necessary as well as the expertise of teachers within the staff.

Since a teacher’s personal professional development goals were linked to the performance appraisal system within the school, teachers identified areas they wished to develop and discussed these with their appraiser. This was then negotiated with the principal and agreed upon by the board. Each teacher was given a nominated amount for professional development each year, but staff interviewed stated that this was flexible if they were able to make “a good case” for needing more. The principal explained the system this way:

*Teachers have their own personal goals for PD and we have what we call our school targets for PD. Within their personal targets I always say that at least one must be a curriculum target. So they set three or four targets a year and we find courses for them. I allocate certain amounts of money to meet the targets. I would say that every staff member, during the course of the year, would have a minimum of a thousand dollars spent on them.*

2.3 Documents: School plans

School planning and organisation appeared to be well documented. There were clear statements of the learning and teaching policies, plans and programmes as set out by the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). The principal stated that he required all his staff to be familiar with the NAGs and for this reason each staff member had “a NAG booklet” which contained each NAG and an outline of what it meant. The “Systems Procedures sheet” set out the structure of the school’s management of policy and procedure. The principal explained that curriculum delivery started with the school charter and vision and worked its way down to actual classroom implementation. The curriculum documents, particularly the strands and achievement objectives, then informed what the school called their “Achievement Statements,” which were housed in a booklet. These covered headings
such as academic, social, physical and cultural statements about what the school expected to achieve. The notion of a balance between all these areas was highlighted here. The principal emphasised that through these four areas, “we want the essential skills and attitudes and values to permeate.” The role of the Board of Trustees in curriculum delivery and development was also included in these statements.

The school also had strategic plan booklets, which housed the six-year plan for school and curriculum review, implementation plans, and school policies. The strategic plan for curriculum review, development and implementation presented an overview of how the school intended to plan for review and budget considerations, specific curriculum development foci over that period (also linked to budget planning), and what was called “monitoring” and “implementation” which related to a review of classroom programmes and practices. The staff also had access to curriculum guides for all curriculum areas. These contained the specific curriculum policy, associated notes for guidance in delivery, two or three Year implementation plans, and lists of resources available within the school. Each classroom teacher was then required to have an overview tracking book which contained things like timetables, long-term plans, weekly plans, and unit plans. Assessment information was kept in a curriculum tracking book. One of the teachers interviewed described this book as being,

Like our Bible, you tend to take it home with you each day in case there is a fire, you’d be lost without it!

Individual student portfolios were also part of the school curriculum document system. These were generally “snapshot” pieces of student work, which were collected at regular intervals each term. These portfolios appeared to be primarily for the purpose of reporting to parents. They went home with the school reports and were used during parent-teacher interviews.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

As stated earlier, curriculum leaders had budgetary responsibilities and policies were planned for by the team based on the perceived current need. This varied from year to year depending on the particular school focus as outlined in the strategic plan for curriculum delivery, development and implementation. The school appeared to be very well resourced across the curriculum. Curriculum leaders and staff interviewed all mentioned that they were generally able to purchase new resources if they were considered beneficial to teachers’ PD and/or students’ learning. However, in the area of Information Communication Technology (ICT), the teacher-in-charge talked of continually needing more money to be able to keep up with advances in technology. She stated that she thought that many of the children were better resourced in this area at home than they were at school.

2.5 Assessment policy

The collection of achievement information occurred in a systematic manner under the direction of the DP and AP. There was a school-wide plan for checking on student achievement. Ensuring that these requirements were met was the responsibility of the DP and AP. It was noted that there was a big emphasis on ensuring a balanced coverage of the curriculum in all classroom programmes. The school’s tracking and overview book that each teacher was required to keep was collected in once a term by the DP and AP and
checked against the school requirements for planning and assessment. Prior to teachers handing in their books, a checklist was distributed so that they could ensure they had included everything they needed. As the DP said:

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\text{It acts as a kind of warning for them, that it's time to hand everything in and so it is actually monitoring what is happening across the school.}
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The AP mentioned that the school had developed their own “reading cards” which also were required to be filled in and collected for monitoring.

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\text{We have to do running records three times a year at least and these are filled in on these cards at particular times and collected in, checked, analysed and aggregated for school-wide assessment purposes.}
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The school had recently developed an “overview booklet” which, as the AP noted, acted like a coverage booklet that was filled in for each curriculum throughout the year as the different strands and objectives were taught. It was linked to the curriculum implementation plans to help ensure coverage. This booklet had a “guidelines sheet” to ensure teachers filled in the booklet correctly. The AP explained that in the junior school, each teacher brought their booklet along to a syndicate meeting usually about the middle of each term so they could “start filling it in together, because it’s still a new idea - we tend to fill it in together so we know we’ve got it right.”

Student portfolios were collections of student work, which included teacher assessments and self and peer-assessments by the children. As stated earlier, it appeared from interviews with senior management and staff that these were primarily for the purpose of reporting to parents. A timetable for the collection of students’ work each term was provided by senior management for staff. Also, teachers were required to fill in an annotated sheet, which sat alongside the sample of work. The curriculum area and theme and achievement objectives were stated along with what the school termed the “expectations” or learning outcomes. A “results section” stated if the child was below, at or above the expectations in this area. The AP stated that this was for parents:

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\text{[so that]... they are able to look at the sample of work and the objectives and see how their child has done. They can then say this is what he or she can do, what can I do to help them get better so they can reach the “above” level. This is then discussed in our interviews with them.}
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There was currently some discussion amongst teachers about the need to review this system for some curriculum areas. For instance, one of the teachers mentioned the difficulty in assessing music when the objective was appreciation. As he said:

\[
\text{How can you be – “below” – “at” - or “above” - in appreciation? It’s just too subjective!}
\]

The difficulty of assessing some essential skills was also highlighted, particularly in areas such as social and co-operative skills.

Student progress towards meeting targets for school-wide achievement was determined through a variety of measures such as Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs); Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning project (asTTle) testing; new essential skills test put out by the Ministry of Education; Australian Science and Mathematics tests; the National
We have what we call the national norm standards but we have our [named school] standards too. We have found that what others have classified as a level 1 standard is too low for our school. We want to be able to make comparisons with schools like ours, for instance, in decile ranking. So in the meantime we have created our own “Expectation” standards for children to meet.

School-wide aggregation of assessment information was well organised and reported on, particularly in the areas of numeracy and literacy. ERO had commended the school on the systems in place for collecting and aggregating data. They stated, “Detailed analysis of achievement data provides school management with information on the progress of boys, girls and groups across a range of subjects. The board is well informed on achievement trends and issues and uses achievement information to make informed decisions.”

The principal stressed the importance of this information stating:

This process is really important, it guides my thinking and planning towards resources we may need as well as PD my teachers might need to help them “come up to speed” in a certain area. It tells us where we “fit” against others and how well we are doing.

The latest ERO report examined the school’s formative assessment procedures and practices in literacy as part of their focus for review. They stated, “Teachers use a range of strategies focused on improving teaching and learning in literacy”, and that “effective use is made of standardised and diagnostic testing data to plan relevant programmes.” ERO also highlighted the success of the school’s “moderation” processes in literacy, which they noted had contributed to the consistency of expectations for learners within and across levels. They stated that structured moderation of student work had led to greater professional dialogue between teachers, “contributing to teacher knowledge and awareness of best practice.”

There was also regular reporting to the board and parents about student achievement in a range of curriculum areas. Parents had two structured interview times with teachers a year, and two written reports. The student portfolios were also part of the procedures in reporting to parents.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

This has largely been covered in previous sections. In line with the NAGs, emphasis was placed on numeracy and literacy, especially in Years 1-4. It was apparent that there was considerable emphasis in both these areas in professional development and resource acquisition. The school was about to begin the Ministry of Education Early Numeracy Project and the Advanced Numeracy Project, which were already planned for both in terms of time and financial planning for resources. Curriculum teams had responsibility for the development and review of school-wide policies and PD. Senior management were responsible for overseeing the implementation of policies and procedures into classroom programmes, and the monitoring and assurance of policies and practices were also part of their role. The principal had overall responsibility in curriculum policy and practice but
devolved the day-to-day running of these systems to his senior management team who kept him informed through regular management meetings.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

Mathematics and language were usually planned on an individual or Year group basis to meet the differentiated needs of the children. Syndicates planned other curriculum areas, either by Year level or individually. The junior school seemed to plan co-operatively most of the time whereas the senior school varied, depending on the Year level or teachers’ interest. The DP noted:

*The senior school tend to do their own thing more than the juniors. The juniors plan very carefully together and that filters down into unit plans and lesson plans whereas the seniors tend to split up into twos in a definite Year 2- or 3-level planning.*

“Yearly draft topic sheets” were developed by syndicates from the school’s implementation plans. These helped give structure to syndicate planning, however, it was explained that they remained “draft” so they could be responsive to other topics that may crop up during the year. The curriculum strand and a topic heading were included. For instance, term one for the juniors, science was “Material World” and the topic was “Preserving Food.” Term overviews were planned collaboratively by syndicates and completed at the end of each term ready for the following term taking into consideration the school’s implementation plans and policies. The yearly draft sheet mentioned above was consulted at this time. Long-term plans were also planned co-operatively with a separate plan for mathematics, taking the school implementation and assessment requirements into consideration.

As stated earlier, unit planning was generally undertaken as a syndicate in the junior school but individually, or in levels, in the seniors. The junior syndicate teachers often shared the unit planning between them over the term. As one junior teacher explained, “We often do this prior to the term that’s coming up so that we’re quite a way ahead and so we can gather resources and share them out.” Teachers then modified the plans and created learning expectations or learning objectives relevant to the needs of their children. The senior school used textbooks for mathematics, which were used flexibly to meet the needs of the children at their Year level. There was generally a whole-school “big idea” topic several times a year. Syndicates often planned topics or themes together, based on the “big idea,” coming together as a whole school to share the final products of study at the end of the topic.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

The teachers used the national curriculum documents, Ministry of Education handbooks and supplements, school plans, and long-term plans to assist them in the planning of their detailed classroom programmes. English and mathematics programmes were tailored to suit the needs of students and focused largely on Year levels from the curriculum. Weekly and daily lessons were prepared from the unit plans by individual teachers. This way, while they were working towards achieving the same expectations or outcomes, they were also able to meet individual and group needs and have flexibility for “interest” within their own classes. For instance, in the junior school the Material World topic in term one was “preserving food.” The expectations were the same for all classes but each teacher had a
degree of flexibility in being able to take a different aspect of the topic to investigate with their children.

As stated earlier, teachers were expected to keep the tracking and overview books up-to-date and these were monitored each term by senior management.

Example: A language lesson in the junior school
The classroom environment was bright with some rather impressive children’s artwork displayed. There were project charts by some of the children and work contained positive feedback comments from the teacher.

The session began with the whole class reviewing the “rules” for discussion before sharing their news in groups. When this was completed a few children presented the key ideas from their own group’s news and there was a brief discussion about one or two areas of interest. The children appeared to be very confident with the process of group discussion and spoke articulately and relatively succinctly for ones so young!

The class then moved into some “blend” practice from a programme used across the junior school. The children appeared well drilled in the sounds and songs which were part of the programme. They then moved into the story-writing part of the lesson with the teacher modelling a short story, which contained a number of errors for the children to find. The errors linked to the current class focus on contractions. The children were then sent away to begin their own story-writing. They seemed to use dictionaries and word-blend cards confidently and were often observed using one of these resources to help a peer find the “right” word. During this time the teacher “roamed” checking on children’s work and encouraging those having difficulty starting. She gave feedback on work and suggested ways children could check their spelling independently. The morning session finished with a short story and “tidy-up music” before play.

This teacher stated that she believed the national curriculum guided her planning and thinking about learning and teaching. She saw her role as a facilitator in this process, guiding her children towards meeting challenges and taking them on confidently. Ensuring that school policies and curriculum planning requirements were met was another of her responsibilities. When asked what purposes she thought her written plans had served, the teacher commented that “they were for accountability purposes, primarily to ensure that you have covered what is required, also as a record for others.”

Coverage of the curriculum appeared to be a strong theme running through the conversations with all staff at this school. This teacher spoke frequently about syndicate planning helping her, “to keep on track with what is required and what needs to be covered.” She also mentioned the value of “integrating” some curriculum areas, “in order to cover two curriculum areas at once,” both in planning and assessment. The value of this approach, she described, “Rather than two-week blocks of different things, we have four weeks of two areas linked together so we are able to assess both curriculum areas as well.” The teacher planned weekly for instructional groups in reading and mathematics. The particular objective for each group session was noted and the resources required. She generally used her unit plan to guide her day-to-day planning of other curriculum topics.
Assessment practices in this class followed the school systems as described earlier. The teacher used pre and post testing as a method of gathering her children’s initial understandings and knowledge about a curriculum area. Portfolios had samples of these tests and of students’ best work. There were no annotated notes at this stage, although she stated that she was working on these at that time. When asked if she felt there was a lot of paperwork to complete, the teacher commented that because much of the planning was done co-operatively with the syndicate so she did not feel “overwhelmed by paper.” She did admit that the portfolios were somewhat time-consuming but felt they were worth the effort because parents found them so valuable. Her tracking and overview books appeared very comprehensive with a great deal of planning and assessment information, such as school entry surveys of individual children, six-year net results, and running records as well as plans and resources.

4.0 Discussion of findings

The school appeared to have a strong focus on curriculum, which was guided by the National Administration Guidelines, the national curriculum, and interpreted to meet the charter and vision of the school. There were structured management systems for curriculum in place and all staff interviewed appeared to be aware of the policies and procedures and took these into consideration when planning and assessing. One teacher did mention that because of the comprehensive nature of the documentation required, some new teachers to the school needed support, “to come to grips with it all.”

The principal has been at the school for a number of years and has established a “way of doing things around here” that seems to work well for everyone. The school consistently receives positive ERO reports - a point which the principal is quick to mention. He is obviously very proud of his school and very supportive of his staff. There is a team culture apparent across the school and all staff interviewed highlighted this as a positive aspect for both themselves and the children. As one staff member said, “Because we work as a team, sharing ideas and generally being supportive of one another, the kids see this and work better in teams too.” It’s the whole role-model thing.

Senior management and other teachers with an interest or expertise in a curriculum area led the curriculum teams. These groups had responsibilities for policy, resourcing and PD and seemed to facilitate these roles well across the school. This meant that teachers across the school appeared to be clear about the expected levels of achievement for their students across the curriculum. The senior management had responsibility for overseeing the implementation of curriculum policies and practices and also a monitoring role to ensure curriculum coverage and assessment procedures were being followed. This system seemed to work well with staff generally complying willingly with these expectations. The collection of assessment information appeared to be very comprehensive with the tracking books full of samples of work. A question might be asked about the value of some of this information in improving student ongoing learning. The latest ERO report recommended that staff undertook a review of current formative assessment practices, which highlighted the need to look at the amount and purpose of some of the assessment information being collected.

Unit planning approaches appeared to be different across the two syndicates, with the juniors largely planning co-operatively, and the seniors in pairs or individually. There did appear to be an emphasis on planning and assessing at one level of the curriculum for each Year group, particularly in the senior school. Curriculum strands and objectives were the
focus for long-term and unit planning and there was an emphasis on ensuring a balanced coverage of the curriculum throughout the year. The introduction of the overview booklet was one way the school was developing to monitor this. A question might be asked as to whether the widespread attention on “balance” and “coverage” of the curriculum could be seen as “driving” much of the policy and practice in the school?

Teacher skill and knowledge was supported by a strong professional development focus. Teacher expertise in curriculum was clearly valued and supported with opportunities to take on leadership roles in school-wide professional development. The principal stressed the importance of teacher professional development for the improvement of classroom practice and ultimately, student learning outcomes. The school provided generous funding for individual teacher PD and the board was supportive of this focus. Interestingly, the principal commented that one of the “unfortunate” outcomes of placing such a high priority on PD for his staff was that “they become so damn good that I lose them to senior management positions in other schools, so I find I’m continually having to start over again!”

The school was well resourced with the principal stating he was always looking for resources and ideas to improve teaching and learning practices. The new property developments made the school an attractive environment to work in for teachers and children. Literacy and numeracy were given a high priority for every child, and systems and resources to cater for children with special needs and abilities were well established and recognised by ERO in their last review.

5.0 Summary

- A focus was the well established systems and procedures for curriculum management and delivery guided by the National Education Guidelines, national curriculum documents and the school charter and vision.
- Senior management worked collaboratively together to ensure the smooth-running of the policies and practices relating to curriculum. They had a monitoring and assurance role in this area.
- A focus on curriculum coverage and balance featured in all conversations with staff and was highlighted in school policies and procedures.
- Positive ERO reports supported the school’s effort to develop the “whole” child academically, socially and emotionally.
- Teachers generally supported the systems in place for curriculum management and delivery and were clear about the expected levels of achievement for their students across the curriculum.
- Staff highlighted the positive “team culture” within the school and saw this as an important element that encouraged professional sharing and dialogue.
- Planning and assessment systems and procedures were comprehensive with a great deal of information being gathered and stored.
- Teachers planned using the national curriculum documents. There appeared to be an emphasis on “level” planning, particularly in the senior school.
- Syndicate planning varied within the junior school and senior school. Generally, the junior school planned units of work co-operatively at the end of each term ready
for the following term. The senior school appeared to plan in Year levels (pairs) rather than as a whole syndicate. Some whole-school topics occurred during the year.

- Some classes appeared to be undertaking “integrated” teaching. It was mentioned that this was in order to cover the curriculum and save time in planning and assessment.

- School-wide collection and aggregation of student achievement information was well used to inform classroom practice and resource allocation. The Board of Trustees was fully informed and supportive of the school’s efforts in this area. It could be argued that there was too much recording of information.

- Professional development for staff was a high priority. Personal professional development was linked to performance appraisal systems and each teacher had a professional development budget which appeared quite substantial.

- There was a focus on school-wide professional development where staff were able to share curriculum expertise and take on leadership roles.

- ERO had recommended that the school review its formative assessment practices and it was envisaged that professional development would be targeted in this area for all staff.

- Outside curriculum expertise was called upon when needed.

- The school was well resourced with new buildings and play areas supporting the learning and teaching environment.

**CPI1: An integrated contributing primary school**

**1.0 Description**

This school is a seven-classroom, decile 6, integrated, contributing primary (Year 0-6) school in a large city. The student population of over 180 students was made up of 65% Pakeha; 2% Māori; 20% Asian; and 13% Pasifika and other origins. There were no foreign fee-paying students. This integrated Catholic school has had considerable renovation in the last few years and a further upgrade of the library was desired.

The principal stated that she definitely wanted children from this school, on leaving, to have learnt much, be open to ideas, and to be competent people; in short, to be the best they can be. There was specific focus on literacy and numeracy, particularly in Years 1-4. But, in particular, she stated that children were taught to be caring individuals, aware of the needs of others without neglecting themselves. In essence, they were striving to produce “well rounded” individuals who would go on to fulfil positions of leadership.

When asked for an example of a student of whom she was particularly proud, the principal said thinking of just one was not easy. Interestingly, she went on to say, “We tend to think of children in terms of levels now.” As a school, the teachers had set up exemplars of performance, in writing, and had put emphasis upon teachers using the levels exemplars to look at children’s work in great detail in light of these. When asked if they used the national exemplars, she stated that they had not begun to use them yet, but that professional development in this area was planned for 2004.
The latest Education Review Office Report commented favourably on the quality of education at this school and noted that the quality of programmes was underpinned by the board’s and staff’s “high expectations” of student achievement and behaviour.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management team consisted of the principal, deputy principal (DP), assistant principal (AP) and the director of religious studies. Each curriculum area was managed by a curriculum team with one teacher in charge of each team. In addition, there was a curriculum team leader for religious education within this school. These teams met to discuss needs, resources, long-term plans, and other curriculum matters. The school had worked with an education consultant to devise a curriculum planning method that was designed to draw on the national curriculum statements in order to plan for the specific needs of the students at this school. In addition, staff had been involved in curriculum professional development run by Ministry of Education contracts such as the Early and Advanced Numeracy Projects.

The school-wide curriculum plans were devised through the curriculum team method and included information about: planning requirements; indicators of quality teaching and learning; approaches for teaching; curriculum overviews of achievement objectives and learning outcomes; contexts of learning (suggested topics); assessment requirements; school-wide programmes in each curriculum area; monitoring, performance reporting and moderation reviewing procedures with exemplars; and a list of resources.

A weekly timetable allocation was planned for each curriculum area. This set out either the time at which each subject would be taught school-wide (numeracy, literacy, religious education and the arts), or the expected weekly allocation of hours for that subject. Health/PE, science, social studies, and technology did not have times allocated as they were often woven in with other areas but junior assembly and junior developmental times were allocated.

In social studies, science and technology the school had made a decision to focus assessment of achievement on processes and skills rather than on knowledge outcomes. Targets were also set in literacy and numeracy. These were established and reviewed annually. For example, by the end of Year 2 most students were expected to be able to: skip count forward in 2s, 5s and 10s; group within 10 and doubles of 10; and, know a quarter and a half.

There were two syndicates within the school. The AP was syndicate leader for Years 4-6 and the DP for Years 0-3. The syndicates used the two-year overviews devised by each curriculum team from which to plan their programmes. In this way, they sorted out the topics that they would cover together to ensure there was no duplication for children as they moved though the school.

There was a school management meeting each week. At this meeting, organisational issues such as programme, timetable, assessment and budgetary matters were taken care of. The AP and DP were responsible for analysing data gathered on curriculum areas at certain points of the year. Reports were written for the principal and the Board of Trustees. Rather
than reporting this information back to the teachers, the AP stated that the teachers used the information they gathered themselves at the classroom level.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

There was strong school leadership support for professional development across the curriculum. In fact, professional development was highlighted as a focus area for the Education Review Office visit in 2001. The ERO report indicated that the school climate was one that was conducive to improvement. In English, continuing professional development ensured that teachers were kept up to date with strategies for improving student literacy. This included the principal being part of “literacy leadership” workshops, Learning Media professional development programmes for staff, and, in mathematics, teachers had been involved in the Early and Advanced Numeracy Projects.

Interviews with team leaders and teachers indicated opportunities to attend courses and undertake qualifications, particularly in religious education. Whole-school professional development also took place when necessary so that all teachers understood new initiatives, the last Friday of every holiday period being reserved for professional development in the school. During this time the staff had undertaken development in things such as Information Communication Technology (ICT), and First Aid. When appropriate, this school brought in outside consultants to provide professional development, at a cost to the school. The Board of Trustees, in their desire to have well qualified and well informed teaching staff, met this cost.

2.3 Documents: School plans

As stated above, the school had clear statements of the learning and teaching programmes. These were in the form of statements devised for each curriculum area (for example, the English statement described above). These documents were disseminated to staff to guide their unit and lesson planning, and assessment and reporting.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

Curriculum leaders had budgetary allocations that could be used for purchasing necessary resources. The school appeared to be very well stocked with resources across the curriculum and an attractive, well stocked school library was in evidence. There were also resources for accelerate groups, Reading Recovery and remedial programmes. The 2001 ERO report stated that the school was well served by the experience and capability of the teacher aides employed.

Interviews with the teachers revealed that they found Te Kete Ipurangi sites useful, that they appreciated resources provided free to the school such as the science and health/PE curriculum guides, and that they purchased published resources and equipment.

2.5 Assessment policy

The collection of achievement information occurred in a systematic manner under the direction of the DP and AP. A school-wide plan for checking on student achievement had been developed at the school level and implemented through an assessment timeline. The DP and AP gathered the information, analysed it and reported to the Board of Trustees in terms of the overall student achievement and achievement of particular groups. Each year, achievement targets for every area of the school were set and reported against.
The 2001 ERO report confirmed the use of school-wide data by stating that reports on student achievement were purposeful and used to good effect by the board and the teachers. Teachers used a range of diagnostic and standardised tests as well as some of their own assessments. ERO reported that in 2001, standardised testing indicated that as a group, students at this school were achieving above the national age norms for reading comprehension.

Student progress towards meeting targets set for school-wide achievement was determined through a variety of measures such as the Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs), six-year-old diagnostic survey data, school-developed exemplars, numeracy testing from the Early and Advanced Numeracy Projects, and running records. As described earlier in this report, targets were set in numeracy and literacy for student achievement. Teachers at this school had attended in-service meetings about Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning project (asTTle) but, unfortunately, they did not find this a positive experience and were not using this tool.

There was also regular reporting to the board and parents about student achievement in a range of curriculum areas. The results of school-wide assessments were used to make decisions about the need for new programmes and approaches.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

As explained above, plans were devised for each curriculum area. These documents were disseminated to staff to guide their unit and lesson planning. In line with the National Administration Guidelines, emphasis was placed on literacy and numeracy, especially in Years 1-4. In line with this, literacy and numeracy and religious education had a lead teacher who worked with a curriculum team and there was a school-wide plan, assessment policy and professional development in each. The other curriculum areas were coordinated by a lead teacher and a curriculum team who were responsible for school-wide planning and information about professional development opportunities.

Example: Religious education (RE)

There was a teacher who was appointed as the director of religious studies. This was in line with the special character of the school. This special character was reflected in the daily life of the school and expressed through the charter, strategic plan and board policies as well as in the timetable and running of each classroom. The director of RE had three and a half hours a fortnight to assist teachers with planning, teaching or assessing. She provided a planning sheet for composite classes as the programme was structured into Year group levels.

Led by the director for religious studies staff members had been implementing the plan in religious education that included theology as well as character, content knowledge, and Bible study. The Bishops laid down the timetable for the year and the programme was provided in workbooks and other support materials. Long-term, school-wide planning was carried out in RE as for other curriculum areas and the RE was divided into strands that could be integrated with other curriculum areas. The RE director indicated that she saw this
as a good thing as long as the RE was not “watered down.” The Board of Trustees approved this plan.

The RE director explained her role as collaborating with other teachers to set the programme out in a long-term plan, assisting with the provision of resources for teaching this aspect of the curriculum and monitoring the teaching of RE throughout the school. She also explained that she went into classrooms to assist teachers to implement the RE curriculum and to use the resources. Assessment indicators and a timeline for these had also been developed.

As in other curriculum areas, the RE director explained how she had translated the curriculum documents from the Catholic Education Office into school policy and plans. She stated:

I had some help from a consultant but I found that too wordy. So I modified that and it took me a year and a bit to put the curriculum plan together and it modelled all the other curriculum area plans. But I had to come up with RE goals and performance indicators but instead of 80% of the children should be able to do something, I felt 100% should be able to because that’s why they are at this school.

The director of RE carefully monitored the planning and delivery to be sure that knowledge about the Catholic faith was taught in a systematic way (ERO, 2001). There were also very strong bonds and links between the parish church and the school with the children regularly attending mass. The parish priest also visited one class a week.

RE advisers visited the school to assist with running staff meetings on topics such as “drama in RE” and “dance in RE,” thus integrating the RE curriculum with other curriculum areas. Books were provided in the RE programme for parents so that they could support their children at home. They are colour-coded with the strands of the curriculum for ease of use. Teachers were continually involved in professional development in RE through studying for a Certificate of Religious Education. Some also worked towards gaining a Certificate in Leadership in a Catholic School.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

The teachers planned their programmes together at the syndicate level. They used the school plans as a guide and developed units to fit in with the long-term plans. They cross-grouped between classes for teaching numeracy but mostly, the classroom teacher taught all other curriculum areas.

Each syndicate prepared a term overview from the school plan. Some parts of this are already set, for example, the RE programme. Planning for units occurred at the syndicate level in most instances. Based on the school and syndicate term plans, each syndicate planned, taught and assessed units at the level of the curriculum appropriate to that Year group level. However, planning for literacy and numeracy tended to be undertaken by individual teachers based closely on children’s needs in the groups that they had.

Syndicate leaders had the responsibility for collecting the assessment information as set out in the assessment timeline. This information went to the principal and was put into the computer and analysed before being presented to the Board of Trustees. In recent times,
there had been an emphasis throughout the school for children to know what the learning intentions were. They wrote them into their “draft” books and sample folders went home to indicate to parents what the learning intentions were and how well the children had met them.

One syndicate leader explained that she visited classrooms for appraisal purposes each term to look at standards and effective teaching judged against indicators. According to this syndicate leader, this process worked as part of a collegial flow and no one was afraid to ask for help or extra resources. The RTLB teacher and principal were also on hand at most times to assist if necessary. Where there may be special circumstances or needs, if necessary, the school also had the help of the pastoral care fund for financial aid for extra student help.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

The teachers did not appear to refer to the national curriculum documents very much in this school because school-wide plans (based on the national curriculum documents), term plans and syndicate unit plans made this unnecessary. One teacher explained that this had not always been the case. She said that to begin with, teachers had found the paperwork overwhelming and that they had had some difficulty interpreting what was meant by the achievement objectives, particularly in the English document.

Teachers planned their own lessons from the units prepared within each syndicate team. In this way, while they might have been working at achieving the same achievement objectives, each classroom may have been learning in a different way. Teachers were expected to keep ongoing work plans to record specific planning, and the syndicate leader checked these from time to time as explained above.

4.0 Discussion of findings

It would appear that there was a very strong linkage of curriculum throughout this school. The national curriculum underpinned all the school-wide plans and syndicate group unit planning was a critical link in implementation. The curriculum leaders appeared to facilitate the preparation of school-wide programmes of instruction as well as clear expectations of achievement supported by exemplars for each level of learning. This meant that teachers at this school were very clear about expected levels of achievement for their students across the curriculum.

Teacher knowledge and skill was supported by the strong curriculum team organisation throughout the school, the planning and assessment strategies and the provision of professional development. The school was aware of and/or using some of the new assessment tools (for example, ARBs, NEMP, exemplars) had analysed gaps in their students’ achievement (for example, numeracy), and had sought suitable programmes and professional development programmes to address these needs. Time was spent by all staff in professional development at both the school and personal levels.

This was a well resourced school. This meant the children were able to take advantage of opportunities through the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy were given high priority in every child’s education, but children with special needs and abilities received extra attention where appropriate. Staff responsibilities were clearly defined and school-wide plans and policies were implemented for the benefit of all. While this might have impinged
(at times) on flexibility, this well organised institution made sure that all of its students had opportunities to meet their potential.

There was emphasis on useful and pertinent documentation within the school. None of the teachers interviewed expressed concern about paperwork at the time of interview. One explained that she thought there was significantly less paperwork required than shortly after the emergence of the curriculum documents. Probably due to the fact that planning was structured by the school long-term plans, teachers were only required to plan for the specific needs of their students within syndicates and could therefore focus on how the needs of children within their class were being met. This said, however, teaching was fairly systematic and focused on moving students through a list of set achievement targets.

The teachers who took part in this research felt accountability acutely. All of the teachers interviewed raised this as an important aspect of their work. Rather than being seen as a negative aspect, accountability appeared to be accepted as integral to the successful functioning of the school. Appraisal of teachers within the performance management systems was accepted and implemented by both the director of RE and by syndicate leaders.

5.0 Summary

- This urban, integrated, Catholic, primary school appeared to be very well organised in planning and implementing the curriculum.
- The principal was very proactive in ensuring that the school was well resourced with both a well qualified staff and teaching materials.
- There was a happy buzz about the school that was full of friendly but lively learning. The school was striving to produce well rounded, caring individuals.
- The school was not overburdened with paperwork but did have a thick school plan containing statements for each area of the curriculum.
- There was clear articulation between the national curriculum statements and the Year group structure of the school. Curriculum levels were securely embedded within this and appeared to form the currency by which learning and progress would be assessed and reported.
- Levels (abstracted from the national curriculum documents) were used as common currency to communicate student achievement and progress.
- Curriculum teams with senior staff leadership provided school-wide curriculum overviews/plans for teachers from which they could follow and plan syndicate and unit plans.
- Assessment information was gathered and analysed by the DP/AP and reported regularly to the principal and the Board of Trustees.
- The national assessment messages (through Assessment for Better Learning or ABeL) and new curriculum initiatives (such as the Early and Advanced Numeracy Projects) were being implemented within the school and used to assist teachers to assess the learning needs of their students.
• The school made good use of consultants, professional development opportunities and new initiatives such as those provided by the Ministry of Education, Learning Media and the Catholic Education Office to support its teachers and their teaching.

• Although there appeared to be a fairly structured approach to long-term planning, class levelling and student assessment, the achievement results (for example, as reported by ERO and in the Board of Trustee Reports) were indicative that students at this school were achieving well.

**FPi2: An integrated full primary school in a regional city**

1.0 Description

This school was a decile 7, full primary (Years 1-8), suburban integrated Catholic school situated in a regional city. The student population consisted of 280 students, and was made up of approximately 78% Pakeha; 10% Māori; 7% Samoan; and 5% Other. There was also a small number of foreign (fee-paying) students. There were 11 classrooms, with an additional new entrant (Year 1) room to be opened in the next term. The school was attractive and well maintained and the classrooms and staffroom had been recently renovated.

The school mission statement read, “The school will provide children with the opportunities to develop their all-round abilities to their fullest potential. The children of [named school] will achieve this in a Christ-centred environment in which the tradition and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are followed.” Accordingly, all aspects of the school’s operation were permeated with the Catholic ethic providing a balanced education that recognises the spiritual, social and environmental needs of each student (ERO, 2001, p. 10). A commitment has been made by the school to deliver one and a half hours of religious education per week per class. This was delivered by the classroom teachers under the guidance of an in-school director of religious studies, and in accordance with the curriculum statement issued for New Zealand Catholic primary schools.

The deputy principal interviewed in this study (the principal was on bereavement leave) believed that the national curriculum should focus on literacy and numeracy, two areas in which she believed the school performed particularly well. There was an expectation that students should achieve highly and/or be provided with opportunities to reach their potential. The ERO report of 2001 stated “Student achievement in literacy and numeracy is showing a trend of consistent improvement through the school over the last three years, including achievement of Māori students.” The deputy principal also held a strong personal view that in order for students to cope with the many problems they faced today, a strong arts programme was important. This would provide opportunities for students to be creative, to problem-solve and would also provide an outlet for expression within a nurturing environment.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management team consisted of the principal, deputy principal and syndicate or team leaders. The principal and DP both had an overview role of curriculum policy review and implementation, and monitoring achievement. Syndicate leaders carried out a range of
tasks including co-ordinating their syndicate, attending discipline and performance management committee meetings, and most had a curriculum responsibility. In addition, one senior member of staff was responsible for religious studies. Other teachers had accepted leadership roles for the remaining curriculum areas and had a small team of interested teachers to work with. The curriculum leaders tended to have additional qualifications, experience or a special interest to assist them to prepare policies, long-term plans, gather resources and liaise with other staff members. Groups met as required and reported directly to the principal.

The school was divided into four syndicates or teams: A – junior school; B – middle school; C – upper school; and D – senior school. These groups met fortnightly and acted as a forum for sharing planning ideas, discussing school initiatives and as a dissemination point for curriculum-related matters. Whole-school staff meetings were held weekly and were regarded as a safe environment for honest discussion.

### 2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

Professional development was highly valued in this school and every effort was made to allow staff the opportunity to attend courses that resonated with the philosophy of the school and were of relevance to classroom programmes. This year, individual staff members have attended courses such as religious education, orienteering run by an agency, and risk management. The whole school was participating in Ministry of Education contracts including the information and communication technology contract, NUMPA (Numeracy) and the arts contract.

### 2.3 Documents: School plans

School plans were contained in a school scheme, and the *National Administration Guidelines* 1–6, guided the contents. Specific focus areas for each of these had been identified, for example, professional learning, purchase of resources, and school reviews. A timeline for the further development and review of each of these had been documented through to 2006. The NAGs guided all aspects of school life including curriculum delivery, reporting to parents, the special character of the school, and health and safety. In terms of NAG 1, curriculum delivery, the school had a curriculum overview plan and individual implementation plans for each curriculum area. These provided clear statements of learning and teaching that were developed with staff and guided all classroom programmes. A computer programme, Yardstick, for collecting data and monitoring school-wide student achievement in literacy and numeracy had been introduced and used as a basis for identifying student needs, staff professional development, and reporting to parents.

### 2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

Curriculum groups had budgetary allocations that could be used for purchasing necessary resources. These groups generally sourced new items, but other staff could also make requests. Suggestions generally came as a result of identified problem areas, book displays, workshops, or in topping up lost equipment. The school appeared to be well stocked with resources across the curriculum and teachers indicated that they were able to access most items they required. Each curriculum group identified an annual working budget, and requests were approved and actioned by the principal where appropriate. The school strategic plan and areas of particular focus influenced the allocation of funds. In 2003, for
example, the health and physical education budget was much higher than in 2002 because of higher priority in 2003.

**2.5 Assessment policy**

Students:
Staff from this school had taken part in a 2003 Ministry of Education assessment contract. As a result, assessment policies had been reviewed with staff identifying that there had been a significant influence on the way they assessed students. Staff commented that the previous focus on summative assessment now needed to consider the importance of formative assessment, and linking learning conversations (formative interactions) to achievement objectives and learning outcomes. They also needed to be cognisant of only collecting data that was genuinely useful.

This school had devised a “tool box” which specified the minimum achievement in knowledge and skills students should acquire. It included items such as basic facts, running records, spelling and phonics tests. School-wide aggregation of data in specific curriculum areas was also carried out regularly, for example, in 2003 health and physical education was a focus. The deputy principal had the task of overseeing the collection and analysis of these items and used the information to identify special needs groups, to report to parents on student achievement and to identify goals for both student and staff development. The collection and analysis of data was clearly documented and systematically gathered at predetermined stages of each year. This system was well supported by staff and was complemented by the commercial IT programme “Yardstick” which was used to record assessment information. In addition, staff collected summative assessment data for each major unit that was taught and made use of their own systems and methods for gathering and collating information. Each student also had a portfolio into which samples of work were gathered during the year. The selection of non-annotated samples was decided by the teacher and was available for parents, teachers and students to review periodically during the year.

Staff:
Staff were fully supported in their work at this school and systems were in place to ensure that the expectations of both the community and the school were achieved. Year 1 and Year 2 teachers had the ongoing support of tutor teachers, and other staff worked collegially in syndicates, planning, sharing and assisting each other to prepare good quality programmes for their students. Personal appraisal systems were not referred to during interviews, but the 2001 ERO report suggested that a form of peer appraisal was conducted though no formal record of these was kept on teachers’ files.

**3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide**

**3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes**

As mentioned previously, this school had an overall curriculum delivery plan which was supported by individual curriculum implementation plans and which provided guidance for teacher planning, topics and/or curriculum coverage and assessment. In consultation with the principal and staff, curriculum groups devised long-term plans for the whole school, which included a balanced coverage of strands, achievement objectives and sometimes topics to teach. These were organised into terms and teachers were able to include them in
their programmes as they saw fit. The teachers all alluded to the flexibility within these plans and the freedom they had to interpret and adjust programmes to suit each class.

Example: Health and physical education throughout the school

A senior teacher in the school led the health and physical education team. In her words, it was not a popular portfolio in the school but she had a personal interest and some expertise in the area, hence her involvement. She was in her fifth year of teaching and had been offered work lecturing part-time in a pre-service teacher education programme. Conversations with her indicated a good working knowledge of the new curriculum, and an ability to spread her net widely in order to access further knowledge and resources to enhance her own and school programmes.

Under the guidance of the previous principal, this teacher drafted a new health and physical education policy. This had been reviewed again recently with a colleague. Consultation with the school community had taken place by way of a questionnaire to parents and as a result, a commitment was made to focus on developing a “health promoting” school policy. This teacher believed it was better to do a few things well within the new curriculum and had targeted healthy eating and the significance of daily physical activity as the school foci. Long-term planning aimed to achieve consistency and continuity through the school-wide programme. As suggested previously, the context for delivery was up to the teachers although whenever possible, outside agencies were used to further support teachers, for example, employing a squash coach with a portable squash court to work with students.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

Each syndicate generally consisted of two class levels, for example, the junior syndicate included Year 0-2 students, the middle syndicate Years 3-4 and so on. The syndicate leader interviewed viewed each curriculum as a framework to guide teachers in their planning and delivery of selected achievement objectives. Choosing contexts that were real and meaningful to the students, and generally facilitating an excitement and a thirst for learning, were seen as important. Syndicates worked together to plan new units, source equipment or review and rework previously used units. There was an emphasis on sharing and celebrating achievements and supporting teachers through the highs and lows of teaching life. Ensuring teachers understood the intent of the various curricula, and that they achieved a balanced coverage was a responsibility of syndicate leaders. They also facilitated teachers’ self-assessment, assisting with programme reviews, long- and short-term goal-setting and professional development selection. Team meetings, planning checks, and viewing student work provided opportunities for these tasks to be achieved.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

Classroom programmes had been developed directly from the national curriculum documents, Ministry of Education handbooks, and long-term plans provided by the curriculum committees. Assessment data, collected as part of the school “tool box” signalled special learning needs and areas of focus, for example, basic facts or letter identification. A good range of resources including textbooks was available for group use, such as the national curriculum for mathematics. Numeracy and literacy were a focus of student learning in this school, particularly in the junior school. These subjects tended to be planned by classroom teachers who often integrated them, where appropriate, into other units of work, for example, social studies, science, and technology. This planning, shown
in the daily plan or as part of a unit, tended to include links to the curriculum and basic information. Teaching strategies and activities were usually well known and not necessarily recorded.

Classroom teachers were expected to have an annual long-term plan, a term plan, a current unit plan, and a daily or weekly plan. As mentioned previously, the syndicate leader checked these once a term. Senior teachers would often parallel teach with a Year 1 or Year 2 teacher.

4.0 Discussion of findings

The evidence from the above information on this school pointed to effective curriculum design and implementation. There was a good management structure in place. The school had a supportive and interested community. Curriculum plans had been developed from national documents and teacher input. There was a good connection between national documents, school documents and classroom plans. There was a sound structure of syndicates and school curriculum teams, which provided a mechanism for planning and flexibility among teachers (that is, a good structure within which flexibility could occur). Professional development was strongly supported by school leadership.

5.0 Summary

- The school had a well organised curriculum plan based upon the national curriculum statements, and teachers referred to the plan rather than the statements.
- Religious education was an important part of the curriculum plan.
- Teachers had clear curriculum direction in terms of planning and achievement targets.
- Teacher syndicates and whole-school staff meetings were the organisational method for curriculum planning and operation.
- Professional development played a major part in teachers’ ongoing curriculum knowledge and practices.
- The evidence of a structured, systematic approach to curriculum raised issues about whether there was much flexibility in teaching and learning.

**FP1: A rural two-teacher full primary school**

1.0 Description

This school was a small, decile 9, full primary school (Years 1-8) situated in a rural farming district. The student population consisted of 36 students, predominantly Pakeha, and with a very small number of Māori students. The school was attractive, well maintained and had undergone some renovation in recent years to create an open-plan environment between the classrooms and the administration area. There were two classrooms and two full-time permanent teachers, and one part-time teacher who taught during principal release time in some of the teacher reliever work in the school. The principal interviewed in this study was acting in the position, but had been the principal several years ago. She was very familiar with the school and the community.
In terms of the national curriculum, the principal was aware that students could be disadvantaged because of the isolated nature of the school environment and the limited resources available. She felt it was important to ensure that students were provided with a wide range of experiences in all curriculum areas, and endeavoured to take advantage of educational opportunities outside of the classroom and made good use of the expertise of the community, that is, inviting a private music tutor to work in the school during school time. Her vision for these students was to encourage them to become independent learners who would take responsibility for their own learning and in doing so, create a sound basis for the future. In support of this view, the latest Education Review Office Report (2001) stated, “Children from this school receive a well rounded education based on national syllabus requirements. Rich educational opportunities have been provided through a number of locally developed programmes.”

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

As a two-teacher school, the principal directed the management of curriculum and duties, and the responsibilities were shared between the two classroom teachers and the part-time teacher. The principal explained that she believed in teachers working to their strengths, and this philosophy appeared to be working comfortably among the three staff members, that is, the principal was responsible and had a special interest in mathematics and social studies, the senior room teacher was responsible for health and physical education, and the part time teacher was responsible for language programmes in the school.

As acting principal, she viewed her role as that of overseeing existing programmes to ensure that curriculum policies were completed, and that they were, where possible, addressed in the classroom. The implementation plans that were in existence during her time as principal have now been mislaid, and she was currently redoing the mathematics plan and the health and physical education plan with the assistance of the other staff members. The senior room teacher was in her second year of teaching, which meant that in addition to her role as supervisor of the senior class, the principal also had responsibility as the tutor teacher.

The school operated on a curriculum coverage plan where curriculum areas, and the strands within these, were selected and then allocated to weekly or fortnightly blocks for the year. Teachers were then able to select topics, which they thought were appropriate.

Twice weekly staff meetings were held, and because of the small staff numbers there was a great deal of informal discussion in order to attend to the day-to-day running of the classes.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

Professional development was highly valued in this school and every effort was made to allow staff the opportunity to attend or take part in courses that were considered to be of relevance to classroom programmes. During 2003, the principal attended asTTle workshops and has already implemented some aspects of this into the school assessment system. The second teacher had taken part in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programme and this has been linked to her personal appraisal goals. The structure of this course had been particularly useful for a small rural school as course facilitators could visit
the school for follow-up visits and assist staff to modify course material to fit the needs of their school.

2.3 Documents: School plans

A range of documentation to support and give guidance to classroom programmes was being used in the school. A yearly plan for each curriculum area was further detailed in teachers’ weekly plans and was, in some cases, supported further by a specific unit plan (for example, the principal cited a commercial mathematics programme which contained topic plans), or teacher-compiled units.

Teachers also completed individual student summary sheets for some curriculum areas, for example mathematics, and each student had a personal portfolio into which examples of work showing specific learning outcomes from various curriculum areas were displayed. As stated in the ERO report (2001) “All essential learning areas and the essential skills, values and attitudes of The New Zealand Curriculum Framework receive due attention in classrooms.”

Student progress was determined through a variety of measures such as the Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs), asTTle testing, and six-year diagnostic survey data.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

Teachers made no mention of budgetary allocations either as part of the management of curriculum or as something that hindered planning and teaching. It could be concluded, therefore, that the allocation of money for the various curriculum areas was adequate and satisfied the needs of the staff.

Specific mention was made of the purchase and use of textbooks, for example, New Zealand Curriculum Maths, and Maths Plus. Beginning School Maths (BSM) programme was also used for the equipment it provided and the black line masters rather than the teaching programme itself.

2.5 Assessment policy

Students:

The teachers both expressed clear views about the importance of students being actively involved in their own learning and displayed an awareness of assessment procedures that could be used to monitor this involvement. Individual student portfolios were developed for all age groups and contained annotated examples of work that related directly to achievement objectives from each of the main curriculum areas. These, along with a yearly written report, provided an important means of reporting to parents.

Formative interactions were a major feature of teachers’ work in the classroom with effective strategies being used to formatively assess students and provide useful feedback to students. Teachers were forward-thinking in their philosophy of assessment and are working to include this in the curriculum overview policy and curriculum implementation plans.
Appraisals were an important feature of staff professional development. As part of the Second Year Teacher Support programme, the principal formally observed the other classroom teacher once a term. They set goals together, focussing on both the school-wide goals and the professional development undertaken by the teacher.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

This school had elected not to have individual policies for each curriculum area, but rather had developed an overall curriculum delivery plan. This was supplemented with individual curriculum implementation plans that included headings such as coverage of achievement objectives, assessment procedures, and budget. An additional coverage plan for each term was prepared, with each subject taught in blocks, and the strands and achievement objectives to be covered also shown. At this school it was usual for these to be continually revised to meet the changing needs of student and class groupings, for example, electing to run parallel topics in mathematics to allow for the cross-grouping of junior and senior class students. As mentioned earlier, the principal elected to oversee mathematics and social studies, the other classroom teacher managed the health and physical education curriculum along with the arts curriculum, and the relief teacher concentrated on overseeing the language programme.

Example: Mathematics throughout the school

The principal had curriculum responsibility for mathematics in the school. She initially accepted this responsibility since other staff members were not familiar with the curriculum. She had a genuine interest in figures and thoroughly enjoyed working with both junior and senior students. As principal, she indicated a special interest in working with the more advanced Year 7 and 8 students. She had studied mathematics at high school and statistics and economics at university. She was a participant in an early Ministry of Education mathematics contract following the 1993 mathematics statement but had not done the more recent Early Numeracy Project or Advanced Numeracy Project contract as she was not teaching at the time. Her hopes for the students in her school were to foster the same interest she had in working with figures. She believed students should be able to use mathematics in “every day situations” and find or be provided with plenty of real experiences in which to practise. She hoped that she would be able to extend and challenge students and found it most rewarding when they came back to her with more ideas and more questions.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

Curriculum coverage was planned as a whole staff with the principal overseeing the classroom implementation of this by the other two teachers. Topic selection was primarily carried out by individual teachers and because of the smallness of the school; some topic selection was able to be quite spontaneous and emerged from student interests or some event that had occurred within the district. As mentioned previously, some parallel planning was evident; that is, in mathematics in order to allow for cross-grouping of students when the need arose. Mathematics planning templates were used through the school but other planning tended to be the responsibility of the individual teachers.
3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

Teachers used the national curriculum documents, Ministry of Education support publications, school policies when available, and long-term plans to assist them in planning individual classroom programmes. Classes were multi levelled, i.e., Years 0–3 and Years 4–8; therefore, planning, and the management of day-to-day programmes was complex. Teachers used a range of strategies to effectively address the levels, ranging from whole-class teaching through to individual work guided by a task board (a list of tasks which students were expected to achieve during the week). Literacy and numeracy programmes appeared to be pitched at the varying levels of students within each class, but other curriculum areas such as technology appeared to be prepared at one level. One of the teachers explained that she tended to introduce new tasks on a Monday and also carried out any whole-class teaching associated with this at the same time. The rest of the week, students worked through their task board activities whilst she worked with groups and individuals. She tried to select tasks that were of good quality but were relatively simple and engaging for the students.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This small school provided curriculum experiences for students that were a blend of local input and national curriculum. The two teachers worked closely to produce a yearly plan for each curriculum area. There were challenges in implementing plans across several student Years and levels on one class. Perhaps because of school size, there was flexibility in the nature of plans and their implementation. The school had a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere.

The school drew its students from a supportive, interested community with a lot of parental involvement.

5.0 Summary

- This small school reflected how the small number of teachers allowed for easy communication to plan, teach, and assess student achievement.
- The small number of teachers placed limits, however, upon specialised teacher knowledge in particular curriculum areas, and meant multiple leadership responsibilities.
- There was an effective system of curriculum organisation which was well understood by the teachers.
- Professional development and appraisal for teachers was carried out effectively.
- Care had been taken to adapt national curriculum to suit local needs and preferences.
FP2: An urban full primary school in a regional city

1.0 Description

This school was a large, decile 1, full primary (Year 1-8) urban school in a regional city. The student population of 393 students was made up of approximately 70% Māori; 16% Pakeha; 9% Pasifika; and 5% other nationalities. The school had undergone considerable upgrades in recent times including new decking, play areas, covered areas and a renovated administration area. There were currently 16 classrooms operating in this school.

To give children opportunities to realise their potential was the motto for this school. Most of the students were from families that struggled financially. The principal was optimistic that the school could produce success for these students. There was a very dedicated teaching staff. Even so, some staff saw this principal’s optimism a little differently and believed that tasks that were relevant to the experiences and abilities of the students should drive the classroom programmes. The principal believed that enthusiasm and passion for teaching was what really mattered in this school. Literacy and numeracy were always seen as the most important focus for classroom programmes, and staff were encouraged to use other subjects, for example, social studies and science, as vehicles within which to teach these. A comment in the most recent ERO report stated, “Students enjoy their learning experiences.”

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management team consisted of the principal, deputy principal and assistant principal. As well as their management roles, the DP and AP had specific curriculum coordination roles, for example, the DP had particular responsibility for English and Māori, in collaboration with whanau leaders (described below), who also had responsibility for a curriculum area. These groups met as required.

The school was divided into three whanau groups, which were originally organised as the junior, bi-lingual, and senior groups but which now, apart from the bi-lingual group, contained a range of students from all age groups. Students from the same family joined one whanau group and stayed with that group for the duration of their time at the school. Teachers from each whanau group worked together under the guidance of a senior teacher and met once a week to discuss issues particular to the workings of their team.

Whole-staff meetings were held twice a week, one of these meetings being reserved for professional development. The senior management team also met each week when required.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

There was strong support for professional development in this school, and as indicated above, a considerable time commitment given to achieving targeted areas. The school made use of a range of internal and external providers and took full advantage of Ministry of Education curriculum contracts. Whole-school professional development was favoured, and in 2003 staff were involved with the Early Numeracy Project and were continuing work with the arts contract facilitators. Each staff member had the opportunity to have
professional development needs addressed and these were generally identified and documented through the individual staff appraisal system which operated in the school. Opportunities for staff to become involved in research projects, advisory groups or other tasks were both welcomed and encouraged by the principal, for example, one teacher was involved in a learning exemplar contract during 2002. The principal believed it was particularly important for students and teachers from decile 1 schools to have a voice in Ministry of Education research projects to ensure that results reflected the achievements of all New Zealand students.

With such a steady flow of professional development, the staff had clear views on what was helpful and what they felt dissatisfied with. For example, they felt it particularly important that there was accurate advertising and clear direction so that staff understood which personnel the various courses were targeted at. Other influencing factors were the provision of workshops that allowed staff to be challenged and to move forward in their own understandings and the theoretical understandings and expertise of the course providers. The staff cited examples of where their needs had not been met in recent times.

2.3 Documents: School plans

A school scheme was the organising structure for a range of documentation to guide staff in their duties and in the delivery of the curriculum. The scheme was organised in terms of the National Administration Guidelines and included a regular review cycle for each component. There was a curriculum overview policy and an implementation plan for each curriculum to guide teachers in their planning and teaching. Existing policies and implementation plans were generally updated by the principal who consulted with the appropriate curriculum leader, and then presented completed policies to staff for approval. The development of new policies took a slightly different route and involved greater consultation with curriculum groups and staff before publication.

In addition there were schedules developed by the school that provided further teaching and learning goals for the core curriculum areas of language and mathematics. These were structured into four phases which matched with the first four levels of the curriculum, but which also provided guidance for teaching students who were pre-level 1, and included additional features which were identified as being important for students in this school. A detailed school-wide individual student profile had also been developed with each teacher’s Year record of summary data for student achievement. This was a very comprehensive document and was continually refined and updated for the deputy principal.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

The school was very well resourced across all curriculum areas, and staff commented that accessing funding for new resources was never a problem. An annual working budget for each curriculum group was set by the principal and additional funds made available for areas of particular focus in the school, for example, this year there was a focus on the new arts curriculum with an ongoing maintenance of mathematics and language, therefore, additional funding was available for these areas. Curriculum leaders were generally responsible for purchasing new resources, and decisions were based on areas of need and whether the resource fitted the character and philosophy of the school.
Good use was made of Ministry of Education resources, which were regarded as being very useful although usually lagging behind the new curriculum for which they had been written. A comment was made regarding the lack of good New Zealand resources for social studies.

2.5 Assessment policy

Students:
The collection of achievement data occurred in a systematic manner under the direction of the deputy principal. The most recent ERO report stated, “This includes cumulative information about student progress based on achievement objectives and performance indicators.” It has been customary for the school to carry out a February survey, which provided baseline data from across the school in order to identify the needs of the students and potential areas of professional development for the staff. The baseline data included: six-year-old diagnostic survey data, letter identification and record of oral language test scores for the juniors; writing samples, reading and semantic tests, and the Burt reading test for senior students. It was also the case that ongoing collection of data across all curriculum areas was done throughout the year and results summarised in student profiles. Each curriculum implementation plan gave guidance to teachers about how to assess students, for example, specific learning outcomes based on achievement objectives from the curriculum would be the basis of what to assess. This view was reflected in the classroom teacher’s planning though not referred to during the interview. A greater focus was on how to document evidence rather than what to gather. Students needing extra support were categorised as Children Experiencing Difficulty (CEDs) or Children Experiencing Extreme Difficulty (CEEDs) and placed in school-based intervention programmes or referred to outside agencies.

Staff:
Appraisal was carried out annually for all staff. Personal professional development goals were identified by each staff member, along with professional development requirements, and funding that was required. To complement this, staff worked within a collegial atmosphere in which there was a great deal of collaborative planning, sharing of ideas and support for staff requiring help. There was an expectation from the principal that students come to school to learn, and that teachers would deliver programmes that reflected the obligations of the curriculum framework and complied with school policy, for example, this school did not teach “invented” spelling. This was monitored through whanau groups by sighting planning and coverage sheets and informally through some class visits by the senior management team.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

The principal had responsibility for overseeing the delivery requirements of National Administration Guideline No. 1 (NAGI) that referred to curriculum. As mentioned previously, the school had all documentation relating to curriculum delivery in a curriculum folder, of which each member of staff had a copy. Each subject area had a policy and an implementation plan along with other information sheets that were considered to be of use to teachers, for example, planning formats, overview or coverage sheets, and detailed schedules for each Year group. A curriculum leader took responsibility for each area and
was responsible for leading the review of policies or for drafting new policies in accordance with the school strategic plans. These people also took responsibility for sourcing and purchasing new resources and for updating staff on matters relating to their particular area. An example of the school-wide organisation for health and physical education is set out below to indicate how the curriculum organisation and planning occurred.

Example: Health and physical education throughout the school

Health and physical education was led by a senior teacher who was also a whanau group (syndicate) leader. This teacher was also responsible for writing a new policy and implementation plan for health and physical education, along with a teaching schedule for levels 1 through to level 4 since this was a subject area with a new curriculum. A set format was followed which had been established with earlier plans and policies. Draft documents were written and shared with the principal and later presented to the three whanau groups for further consideration. A second draft was developed, discussed and modified at a whole staff meeting before becoming a trial document for a period of two years. The implementation plan included headings derived from NAG 1 and included focus for learners, school organisation, budgeting, balanced programme, resources and assessment.

The curriculum leader believed that achievement objectives in the curriculum were not always relevant to the students at this school and although there was a requirement to achieve good coverage of these, he felt the focus of the school policy should on student needs rather than the curriculum. A similar comment from another staff member was that it was difficult to discuss the importance of sport and recreation with students when only three parents in the class were employed. The lead teacher also considered some objectives to be very broad and difficult to interpret.

A long-term plan had been written up which teachers were free to interpret according to the needs of their students. The lead teacher was responsible for monitoring budgetary needs, and for the purchase of equipment and resources as requested by staff members. Monitoring staff coverage of curriculum strands, developing timetables, carrying out informal observations, and promoting the sharing of teaching ideas were all part of his job description. He believed in developing a supportive, collaborative working environment rather than setting up a structure that needed to be policed.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

As mentioned previously, the school was organised into three whanau groups of teachers, which met once a week. These groups developed their long-term plans together to ensure good coverage of the curriculum areas and the strands and achievement objectives within each of these. Sometimes they planned a unit together, but generally it was a time for general sharing of ideas, support for teachers who required help and usual “housekeeping” to keep classes and programmes running smoothly. There was an expectation that all planning would reflect school policies and the requirements of the various curriculum documents, and the whanau group leader checked this once a term. Developing a balanced programme was the primary focus of this school but with a special emphasis on literacy and numeracy.
3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

Classroom programmes were guided by long-term plans developed by the staff but which were flexible enough to allow teachers to meet the needs of their students and work to their own strengths and interests. Topic studies or unit plans linked closely to the curricula. They included appropriate achievement objectives from the curriculum under study, along with specific learning outcomes which contextualised these and detailed the anticipated student learning. English and mathematics topics tended to be focussed more on the school-developed phases of learning as these were seen as “less waffly and far more specific.” Planning was sometimes driven by resources already available in the school but sometimes explored a totally new topic. The new entrant (five-year-entry) teacher found that she had to simplify the achievement objectives for level 1 in order to find a level appropriate for her students. Language or literacy was particularly important for the younger students at this school and trying to blend new information with what they already knew was deemed as being important in both holding the children’s interest and developing their self-esteem. The teacher interviewed reported that the school was happy for teachers’ planning to be detailed enough to work from but enough not to be a chore. Planning was seen as a document written for the teacher and should be full enough to keep her on track and provide reminders of the day’s programme. In the new entrant room where a full-time teacher’s aide was employed, the daily planning was also used as a guide for her tasks during the day.

In terms of aspects of school life, which hindered planning and teaching, the comment again was “time” – too many meetings, and a lack of time in the classroom after school to prepare.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This school faced many challenges. Its decile 1 status indicated that many of the children were from families who themselves faced challenges – economic, social. There was evidence that the teachers in this school were dedicated and hard-working. Teachers received strong support from school leaders, and among teachers there was an ethos of high expectations of the students.

As in other schools within this study, there was a very clear structure of curriculum policies, teams and leaders across the school. These teams were responsible for most aspects of curriculum including the resources, plans and monitoring of outcomes.

5.0 Summary

- This low decile school faced many challenges, but teachers worked hard to improve student learning.
- Teachers were under pressure from the demands of numerous meetings.
- A lot of effort went into developing good curriculum plans based upon the national curriculum statements. Teachers had flexibility in matching the plans to their particular students.
- Strong whanau groupings were used as the organisational basis of this school.
- The teachers of 16 classrooms were organised into three whanau groups (syndicates) for planning. Each whanau covered classes of students of all Years (1-6).
• School policy was to provide a lot of professional development for teachers.
• A school scheme was the link between national curriculum and teacher planning.
• There was systematic collection of assessment data on student achievement.
• Curriculum statement achievement objectives were substantially re-worked to suit the students, since some were considered irrelevant.
• Teachers were encouraged to make adaptations to the school plan when planning lessons. Resource availability or type sometimes limited options.
• Resources had been built up by the allocation of substantial school funds. Curriculum resources acquisition was devolved in an effort to purchase resources relevant to topics and students. This showed the benefits of the weighted funding for low decile schools.
• Language and literacy were given a lot of emphasis in this school.
• The overall impression was of a school which had a commitment to raising student achievement and made curriculum decisions that enhanced the likelihood of achieving this goal.

FP3: A rural full primary school

1.0 Description

This school was a small, decile 10, full primary school (Years 1-8) in a rural district. The student population consisted of 166 students and was made up of 96% Pakeha; and 4% Māori. The school was very attractive, well maintained, and has had extensive upgrades in the administration area, classrooms and the playgrounds. The school clearly reflected the “shady school policy” with several covered play areas provided for junior and senior students. In 2003, there were seven classrooms operating.

The school mission statement was “strive to improve” and the vision statement was to be “the school of first choice for people in the community.” There was also a strong desire from the overall school community to retain the special rural character of the school. Student needs, interests and abilities were the basis for the development of school curriculum delivery policies, and the school was also working towards achieving a fully integrated curriculum as per a model presented by school advisers. This, in turn, related closely to the school strategic plan. High achievement was valued and encouraged, and resources had been made available to support accelerate groups within the senior school. There was a specific focus on literacy and numeracy in Years 1–4, and alongside this a commitment to organise programmes under selected “rich concepts” that allowed, where appropriate, for the curriculum integration mentioned above. The most recent Education Review Office Report was carried out the week prior to this case study, and interim feedback indicated overall satisfaction with the management and general functioning of the school.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The management structure for this school was headed by the principal and supported by a deputy principal and a senior teacher. As a small school, it was possible to work mostly as
a team, and staff members valued this. Each teacher had a curriculum responsibility but mainly in terms of managing the budget, and distributing information of interest to the rest of the staff. Curriculum policies and implementation plans were generally developed at staff meetings by the whole staff and guided by the principal and external support people, for example, school advisers. There was no syndicate structure as such, but with the recent role growth, teachers now tended to work in pairs to plan programmes and sometimes would parallel teach. In addition, the deputy principal had particular responsibility for ICT in the school, and the senior teacher acted as a tutor teacher and was responsible for junior reading and the purchase of reading resources across the school.

Staff met as a whole once a week and carried out a range of tasks, that is, dissemination of information from curriculum leaders, general school “housekeeping” and curriculum-related tasks.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

Professional development was highly valued in this school and every effort was made to provide staff with opportunities to attend courses that fitted with the school strategic plan for curriculum review and their personal appraisal goals. During 2003, numeracy was under review, and middle and senior staff members were involved with the Advanced Numeracy Project run by school advisers. In addition, the whole school was involved with the Integrated Curriculum project also run by school advisers. Two advisers attended staff meetings during the year to work with staff. They have focussed on selecting “rich concepts” around which to plan integrated units of work, such as communication or celebrations, and the use of ICT to further resource this model. As stated by the principal, an integrated curriculum approach needed to be resource-rich. The results of the staff’s involvement in other professional development in previous years could be seen reflected around the school in terms of new resources, management of systems, and techniques for gathering and storing information, for example, as a result of an assessment course attended two years ago, the school now used mail merge as a data base for recording student achievement.

2.3 Documents: School plans

The core business of this school as indicated by the principal, was literacy, numeracy and an integrated programme. There was an over-arching school curriculum delivery policy, and individual implementation policies for each curriculum. This documentation was in the process of being reviewed and reworked in terms of the newly adopted curriculum integration approach. Procedures for the delivery of this new programme were in place. Teachers had considerable freedom in their selection of “rich concepts” within which to address the achievement objectives of the various curricula. The expectations of the school was that teachers documented their teaching on a coverage sheet or strand checker which could be passed on to the class teacher for the following year. There was also an expectation that one “rich concept” was selected per term and one other unit taught. An example of this may be a technology unit, which did not fit well with the “rich concept” and needed to be taught separately. Additional guidelines were set out for classroom assessment, evaluation and reporting and included statements about the school expectations, methods which could be used and the purpose to which any analysis could be put. Nearly all of the above procedures of the above had been developed with the staff as a whole and facilitated by an external expert.
2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

Curriculum leaders had budgetary allocations that were used for purchasing necessary resources. These staff members generally sourced new items, but other staff could also make requests. Suggestions generally came as a result of publishing companies’ book displays, workshops, identified problem areas or topping up lost equipment. The school appeared to be well stocked with resources across the curriculum and teachers indicated that they were able to access most items they required. An annual working budget was identified by each curriculum group and requests approved and actioned, where appropriate, by the principal. The school strategic plan and areas of particular focus tended to influence allocation of funds. A flexible approach was used and special allocations could be made from year to year, for example, the SARs project was not needed this year, so funds were redirected into funding a new accelerate programme being trialled in the Year 7-8 class.

2.5 Assessment policy

Students:

The school policy and Guidelines for Assessment and Reporting gave clear procedures for teachers in the collection and analysis of student work. These documents differentiated between the use of formative and summative assessment, and situated both as part of a teaching-learning-planning cycle. An assessment schedule had been developed which set out a timeframe for data collection and included regular writing and mathematics examples, work samples from the current unit, and other work of the teacher’s choice. These were displayed in students’ individual portfolios. It also listed the expected ongoing assessments, for example, school entry assessments, analysed running records, essential skills tests, reading age tests and anecdotal teacher notes. Reporting was considered as being at two levels, (i) syndicate, staff and Board of Trustees, and (ii) parents, students and teacher. The portfolios were the primary focus of reporting to parents and were sent home four times a year. Each work sample was accompanied by a computer-generated printout, which listed the unit topic from which the work came, the desired learning outcomes, and a grade – “can do well,” “can do,” “cannot do yet.” The desired learning outcomes were derived mostly from the curriculum but included others selected by the teacher, for example, “improve finished product with a border and illustration.” In addition, parents had the opportunity to meet with teachers once a year and also received regular written reports.

Staff:

A staff appraisal process was conducted towards the end of each year with staff identifying and working towards personal goals, and sharing student work, portfolios and management systems with one other staff member. It also included time spent in one another’s room observing a teaching session, and as suggested by the interviewee, offering “a fresh pair of eyes.” The teacher interviewed viewed this process as positive and regarded it as an opportunity for learning on behalf of both parties – the observer and the teacher. As a result of this process, professional development goals for the following year were identified and documented, with a copy going to the principal to action.
3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

The principal had responsibility for overseeing the delivery requirements of National Administration Guideline No. 1 that referred to curriculum. The school had all documentation relating to curriculum delivery in a curriculum folder, of which each member of staff had a copy. As mentioned previously, there was an over-arching policy adopted by the school that related to all curriculum areas, each subject area having an implementation plan, along with other information sheets that were needed by the teachers, for example, coverage sheets and guidelines for delivery or management. This was in the process of being changed to allow for the further development of an integrated curriculum approach across the school and the use of “rich concepts” as an umbrella under which specific topics could be taught. A curriculum leader took responsibility for each area and was responsible for leading the review of policies or for drafting new policies in accordance with the school strategic plans. These people also took responsibility for sourcing and purchasing new resources and for updating staff on matters relating to their particular area. An example of the school-wide organisation for teaching under a “rich concept” is set out below to indicate how the curriculum selection and planning occurred.

Example: Planning and teaching a “rich concept” throughout the school

The underlying foci for curriculum delivery at this school were for students to think critically - and at a high level – and to be independent and resourceful. As mentioned earlier, the core business of the school was literacy, numeracy and an integrated curriculum. In line with this, teachers were required to operate an ongoing programme of literacy and numeracy along with a “rich concept” and one other curriculum specific unit. The “rich concept” at this point was taken from an extensive list provided by the facilitator guiding this development. Teachers aimed to include at least three curriculum areas that would fit well with the ‘rich concept’ and then through a process of negotiation with the students, plan how each subject could contribute to an exploration of the theme. An overview sheet was used to record which areas or strands of each curriculum were covered, for example, materials technology or the living world.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

Teachers worked with one other teacher from a similar class level to develop long-term plans, checking what had been covered and what needed to be covered, along with identifying the interests of the children. At times these pairs of teachers would parallel teach allowing for a cross-over of students between classes in order to better meet individual needs. Some agreed to take responsibility for planning particular curriculum areas and some swapped classes in order to teach to these interests. External providers and events needed to be worked around as well as some school-wide events or programmes, for example, the Keeping Ourselves Safe programme. Mathematics was viewed separately this year as the school had been involved with the Early Numeracy Programme and was about to start the Advanced Numeracy Programme. Teaching was driven by course providers in order to trial the various aspects of the programme. These teachers had considerable freedom in their selection of teaching programmes and were supported to work professionally with minimal supervision.
3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

School policies were seen as a way of taking the national curriculum into the classroom although the teacher interviewed commented that as each curriculum policy was reviewed it became less detailed and more general. She observed that teachers had more freedom in what they taught and children had more opportunity to follow topics of their choice.

When planning a unit the teacher indicated that she made extensive use of the internet and in particular the Te Kite Ipurangi site, English on Line and any others which would give her ideas for planning and teaching. She felt that using the Internet provided her with more up-to-date information and allowed her to keep changing the content of her work and keep it interesting. Her unit planning, as mentioned above, was mostly put together with a teaching colleague. She explained that in a mathematics unit for example, plans included achievement objectives and these provided the goals for students to attain during the unit. Daily planning was recorded in a planning diary and teachers asked to record retrospectively any unplanned worked which was also covered. The teacher interviewed felt that the diary was useful for organisational purposes and helped to bring ideas together in a coherent manner. It was also a record from which to check coverage.

4.0 Discussion of findings

In this school, a lot of emphasis was placed upon literacy, numeracy and integration. There was a stress on retaining the traditional characteristics of the school and matching them to curriculum development. There was high expectation of students’ achievement in this school of students mostly from affluent families. There was little evidence that curriculum statements were referred to regularly. School plans originally developed from them were more commonly the planning reference for teachers. Teachers enjoyed considerable freedom to adapt the plans to suit their own preferences. Work by staff was proceeding on how to achieve greater integration across curriculum areas.

5.0 Summary

- As with many small schools, the whole school tended to work as a team and in pairs of teachers rather than in syndicates.
- Teachers shared out responsibilities for curriculum resourcing and communications.
- Curriculum decisions regarding policies and “rich concepts” for school-wide programme planning were made at the whole school level.
- The whole school focused on mathematics, literacy and integrated topics, called “rich concepts.”
- “Rich concepts” were selected by teachers, covered at least three curriculum areas, and were planned by teachers and students together in many cases.
1.0 Description

This school was a medium-sized, decile 9, full primary school (Years 1-8) in a small town. The student population of 290 students was made up of 86% Pakeha and 14% Māori students. Students were drawn primarily from the nearby town and the surrounding rural area. There was a wide range of students attending the school, but these were made up mostly of middle to high socio-economic groups within the community. The school was attractive, well maintained and resourced, and had undergone recent upgrades in the administration area and the play areas. The school clearly reflected the “shady school policy” with several covered or shaded outdoor areas provided for junior and senior students. There were 11 classrooms operating, along with a Reading Recovery teacher and other part-time teachers working with special needs or abilities students.

The school mission statement stressed the development of students’ potential and the vision statement for the school was to achieve excellence. The acting co-principal believed that literacy and numeracy should be the primary focus within classroom programmes, and in support of this, each class allocated the first morning time block primarily to aspects of the English curriculum, and the mid-morning time block to the mathematics curriculum. Health and physical education were particularly valued within the school and daily fitness programmes encouraged. It was hoped that other areas of the national curriculum were addressed, providing a quality, balanced programme for students.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The management structure of this school consisted of two acting principals who were job-sharing the principal responsibilities, a deputy principal, and three senior teachers. The school was organised into three syndicates, junior, middle and senior, and led by a senior teacher. Each group was made up of teachers from two to three Year groups. These groups met once a week to disseminate general class-related information, to plan together, and to share ideas and provide collegial support. Curriculum responsibilities were shared among the senior management team and other staff members, depending on their expertise and interest. These teachers were responsible for passing on information to the whole staff relating to their curriculum area, and for ordering, organising and storing resources. In some cases they would provide specific support to other teachers, for example, the teacher in charge of technology education also had expertise in ICT and provided ongoing support to staff whenever required. It was reported that teachers worked comfortably in teams, and that a helpful, collaborative working environment exists within the school, which was supported by high levels of expertise among teachers.

The acting co-principal envisaged her role as overseeing a team approach to curriculum delivery, and ensuring teachers had ownership of new policies or curriculum initiatives, for example, the arts curriculum which was currently in the process of being implemented in the school. She also saw her role as maintaining existing programmes including staff appraisal and a systematic curriculum review.
2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

Opportunities for professional development were available to all teachers, and in most cases linked with individual staff appraisal goals, though this could vary if unexpected opportunities became available. Professional development also linked strongly to the strategic goals identified for the school and which were reported to the Ministry of Education. For example, it was noted after class reviews at the beginning of the year of the research, that the school reflected a national trend in which student writing achievement tended to be below students’ chronological age. This prompted a whole-school focus on improving student writing and some teachers attended a Peter Sloan Writing course. Junior school staff had also recently been involved with the Early Numeracy Project (a Ministry of Education contract) and other teachers intended completing the advanced project if places were available. The whole staff had worked with nearby University facilitators on implementing the new arts curriculum, with the school acting as a beacon school to assist a local cluster of schools. The school was provided with additional funding in order to do this work.

2.3 Documents: School plans

School plans were contained within what was referred to as the NAGS Folder or curriculum folder and the contents were organised according to the National Administration Guidelines 1-6. These referred to all aspects of school life including curriculum delivery, reporting to parents, the special character of the school, and health and safety. A timeline for the further development and review of each of these over the next few years was documented. Review was achieved through a partnership between the school and the Board of Trustees. NAG 1, which related to curriculum delivery, was further documented in this folder. It included a policy statement for each curriculum area and an implementation plan to guide teachers in their planning and teaching. Policies were developed collaboratively between a curriculum leader and other staff members. The curriculum leader generally researched, and then drafted a new policy and presented it to staff for approval. An example of this was the arts curriculum implementation which included, among other things, developing a new policy and implementation plan. Three staff members, one for each strand of the new curriculum, accepted responsibility to carry out this work.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

An annual working budget for each curriculum group was set by the principal and senior management team. In addition to this, funds were made available for areas of particular focus in the school, for example, to supplement an arts contract in which staff members were participating, and to assist in “buying in” experts from the local community. Each curriculum leader had a budgetary allocation that could be used for purchasing necessary resources. Staff generally sourced new items through book displays, workshops, or by word-of-mouth. The school appeared to be well stocked with resources, and staff indicated that they were able to access most items they required.

2.5 Assessment policy

Students:

The NAGs folder included information which gave guidance to the collection of assessment data along with school procedures for reporting to parents. Included in each curriculum
policy was a list of further considerations or guidance, for example, teachers would utilise assessment information to improve programmes, promote learning, raise standards and reduce disparity of achievement. The classroom teacher referred to a whole range of assessment procedures that she believed should be driven by the learning outcomes of the particular teaching focus. Tests, observations and self-assessments were mentioned.

At the beginning of each year, a class review was carried out in which all students were tested. This included tests such as progressive assessment tests, running records, essential skills, spelling, writing, and a proof-read test of spelling. The results of these tests provided information for school strategic goals for the year, special needs and special abilities students.

Approximately four years ago, the school began to experiment with the use of an individual student portfolio to provide a snapshot of student performance and to report more effectively to parents. At this point, staff included work samples of their own choice which reflected the learning experiences of the students in their class. A statement describing the curriculum area accompanied each piece of student work, strand covered, and level achieved. It was considered that this not only provided a practical demonstration to parents and showed what was happening in the classroom but also helped parents better understand the curriculum. Reporting to parents was thorough and systematic, including two written reports per year, an opportunity for a parent/teacher interview in March, and receipt of their child’s portfolio each term. The teacher interviewed felt this could be cut back a little to reduce teacher workload while still maintaining a process that was valuable for parents.

Staff:

A staff appraisal process was conducted each year with staff identifying and working towards personal goals, and sharing student work, portfolios and management systems with designated senior staff members. The beginning teacher worked closely with a tutor teacher, and syndicates met once a week to plan, provide support, and disseminate information. These meetings also revealed areas of staff difficulty or concern that could in turn be addressed, through professional development or further internal help from colleagues.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

The deputy principal who was currently acting co-principal in the school had responsibility for overseeing the delivery requirements of National Administration Guideline No. 1 that referred to curriculum. As mentioned previously, the school had all documentation relating to curriculum delivery in a curriculum folder, of which each member of staff had a copy. Each subject area had a policy and an implementation plan along with other information sheets that would be of use to teachers, for example, planning formats, unit examples, coverage sheets, and subject definitions from the curriculum. A curriculum leader took responsibility for each area and was responsible for leading the review of policies or for drafting new policies in accordance with the school strategic plans. These people would also take responsibility for sourcing and purchasing new resources and for updating staff on matters relating to their particular area. An example of the school-wide organisation for the arts is set out below to indicate how the curriculum organisation and planning occurred.
Example

A team of three teachers led the arts curriculum development in the school in order to very successfully cover the four disciplines of this new area, that is, music, dance, drama and the visual arts. These teachers had all been involved in the Ministry of Education contract, which had provided professional development for primary schools in the implementation of the arts curriculum. This school was a Beacon school, which meant it was a lead school for a cluster of other schools in the area. As a result of this involvement, a new policy was drafted, presented to the whole staff for modification, and once approved by the Board of Trustees, had been added to the curriculum folder. An implementation plan was also part of this development and included headings derived from NAG 1 such as the focus on the learners, on the programme of learning, the resources, and budgeting. As a whole school, a long-term plan had been written up which teachers were free to interpret according to the needs and interests of their students. The lead teachers were responsible for monitoring budgetary needs and distribution, and also for purchasing equipment and resources. It has been agreed that the annual budget be broken into two categories, one for funding the visual arts and the other for funding dance, drama and music. Additional money had been made available in order to employ a music specialist teacher from the local community to work with both staff and students. This was identified as an area in which staff were generally not confident and it was felt that working alongside a specialist would be an effective way of increasing the teacher’s knowledge and skills.

In support of the introduction of this new curriculum, staff agreed to hold an arts “Extravaganza” to update parents and to share student work. Each class chose a country, and then selected two disciplines from the curriculum and two achievement objectives as a basis for their work. For example, the new entrant class selected Australia, and then developed artwork and a short play based on an Aboriginal tale.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

The school was organised into three syndicates, junior, middle and senior, which met once a week. These groups developed their long-term plans together to ensure good coverage of the curriculum areas and the strands and achievement objectives within each of these. At times they planned a unit together, but generally it was a time for general sharing of ideas, support for teachers who required help, and usual housekeeping to keep classes and programmes running smoothly. There was an expectation that all planning should reflect school policies and the requirements of the various curriculum documents, and this was checked annually by the principal. Integration was encouraged where appropriate, the primary focus being on numeracy and literacy, especially between Years 1-4.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

Each classroom tended to include two Year groups, for example, Year 1-2 class or a Year 4-5 class depending on the number of students each year. The curriculum documents were seen as the means to deliver in-depth programmes to students, although it was felt that it was difficult to include everything described because of time constraints, and at times the language used was difficult to interpret. The planning sequence of the teacher interviewed was to select a topic and then use the curriculum and the school NAG folder for ideas, occasionally making use of existing units. Teachers generally planned units themselves, and this teacher used an electronic template onto which she typed up each of her units. This template included headings such as achievement objectives, context, essential skills, learning outcomes, teaching/learning experiences and assessment. Planning was seen as a
way of crystallising ideas and organising thinking. The social studies example included in the appendix appeared to be planned according to one level but mathematics, for example, was taught in groups according to student abilities. A particular focus in the school was to ensure special-ability students were catered for. In line with this, teachers encouraged students to take part in a range of extension activities, for example, Otago Maths, the Waikato and New Zealand Science Fair, the New Zealand Literature Quiz, and Australian mathematics and English examinations. Staff were very proud of the achievements of some of their students who had been participating in these activities.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This school had the unusual leadership management of two acting principals. Curriculum leadership was spread among staff. The general approach to curriculum development was to link the school’s strategic goals to curriculum goals and more specific curriculum plans. Professional development was related to the curriculum priorities. Curriculum budgets were developed to staff groups and to school-wide priorities, for example, the recent arts curriculum implementation (aided by external facilitators).

The school had developed school-wide curriculum plans and teachers cited that they had leeway to adapt the plans for their own classes. The school had a well developed assessment policy including the use of portfolios of student achievement. However, there was some teacher disquiet about the heavy assessment workload.

Overall, this was a school with collaborative teacher teams that had effectively connected national curriculum requirements to local needs, resulting in quality education.

5.0 Summary

- This school had two job-sharing acting principals, and organised curriculum planning via three syndicates, each led by a senior teacher.
- There was encouragement for teachers to undertake professional development.
- School plans were developed using national documents, especially NAGs. Strong emphasis was given to literacy and numeracy.
- Assessment strategies were outlined in school policy. Portfolios of student work and teacher assessments were constructed as a basis for reporting to parents.
- A small group of staff (not the same each time) had led the development of a school plan for each curriculum area, following the release of the curriculum statement.
- Syndicates planned class programmes and units from the school plan.

FP5: A large urban full primary school

1.0 Description

This decile 3 full primary school was situated in the suburbs of a large city. The decile rating had been recently upgraded to a five, which was being contested by the school. The student population of around 600 Year 0-8 children was made up of approximately 63% Pakeha; 30% Māori; 3% Pasifika; and 4% Other. The deputy principal (DP) talked of the school’s growing diversity with a number of students now coming from India, South Africa, some Asian students and a few Egyptian children. The school was only seven years
old and was situated in a growing residential area. The DP described the socio-economic “mix” as, “children coming from million-dollar beachfront properties to ‘nappy valley’ type accommodation.” She further stated that the school had some fairly big social issues amongst the students which required careful management and an emphasis on providing strong role models for the children, “in the way staff dress, the way they behave and speak, and our expectations of all our students.”

ERO reported in May 2002 that the school had “a caring family atmosphere which permeates all aspects of the school’s operations.” With roll projections of around 700-800 the school was stretched for space. The school has had to build “up” to accommodate the growing student numbers with more two-storied classroom blocks being considered for the future. The school had formed a partnership with Apple computers. This meant that there was a large focus on integrating ICT into school and classroom programmes and practices.

The senior management structure comprised the principal and a non-teaching DP. It was explained that with only one DP, the management units that were available for another senior management position were, “put up for grabs, with staff putting in proposals for an area of need they want to take responsibility for.” It was then opened up for discussion by the whole staff with the final decision being made by the principal and the DP. This organisation was very new with the principal only being in the job and out of the classroom for just over a year and the DP coming out of full-time teaching duties about six months ago. Both were foundation members of the school. The principal began teaching at the school as a basic scale teacher and moved to senior teacher, deputy principal for six months, and then six months as acting principal before taking on the role permanently. The DP began at the school as deputy principal with teaching responsibilities. The 2002 ERO report commended the senior management on the creation of a cohesive teaching team.

There were 23 full-time teachers, plus a number of part-time teachers. The school employed a full-time special needs teacher and librarian from their operations grant. The DP noted that since its inception that the school had employed a large number of new or young teachers because they believed that young teachers brought with them “those skills we are trying to develop in our students, such as an excitement about learning and the ability to take risks.”

She did comment, however, that this strategy did have its downside with a reasonably high turnover of staff when the “young ones” headed off overseas. Currently, the school had six Year 2 teachers and one Year 1 teacher. For the following year they had employed two Year 1 teachers. This number of inexperienced teachers requiring mentoring support had put some strain on the workload of experienced staff but the DP contended that the school was committed to continuing this policy.

Classrooms were organised into six multi-level teams. Each team had a leader who was responsible for the three or four teachers within that group. The team leader was required to monitor the planning and assessment practices of the teachers in their group and ensure that school policies and planning were being implemented into classrooms. They met once a week with the teachers in their team to co-operatively plan and discuss current school/team requirements. The latest ERO report suggested that this organisation was “a significant factor in promoting a culture where individuals are responsible for their own learning and behaviour.” It went on to state that there was an emphasis on “learning to
learn” throughout the school. The staff was noted as being a group of highly enthusiastic professionals who used a wide range of teaching techniques and resources to cater for the learning needs of individual students. The value placed on the professional development needs of staff was also highlighted in the report.

The ERO report did include a small number of recommendations which were of relevance to this case study. They recommended, first, that there was “a need for the school to develop a quality assurance system to monitor the implementation of all school practices”; and second, that “guidelines for the consistent implementation and assessment of the curriculum be established.” Their third recommendation related to their mentioning that “the board receive regular reports on student achievement with an emphasis on numeracy and literacy.”

These recommendations have undoubtedly been taken on board by the senior management who were endeavouring to develop a wide range of quality assurance systems which reflected the school’s philosophy and culture. As the principal commented:

I believe it’s really important that we don’t just adopt other people’s ideas without thinking about how they “fit into” our collective beliefs and ideas. We need to make what happens in this school our own, so it may make it harder, longer, but in the end we have ownership of it. However, it is clear that we are accountable for what we do here, so effective systems are important and we are working towards satisfying our needs and those of others.

2.0 School systems
2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

Overall responsibility for curriculum within the school fell to the professional advisory groups or “PAGs” as they were commonly referred to. The leaders of these groups were generally also team leaders within the school. The principal explained that she felt this system was vital if the school was to “walk the talk” and encourage staff to take ownership of the systems and practices within the school. Near the end of each year, the principal sent out an email asking team leaders to nominate areas of the curriculum that they were interested in managing. She then negotiated with the team leaders the areas they wished to be involved in.

The PAG leaders headed curriculum teams, which comprised three or four teachers. They had wide responsibilities which included writing the annual plan for the specific curriculum area, reviewing curriculum policies, setting budgets, purchasing resources, providing school-wide professional development, and reporting to the Board of Trustees on reviews, goals, budgets and resources. The principal emphasised that she had total confidence in each PAG and that if any issues happened to arise they would, “work it through collaboratively.” She commented that the large size of the school meant that there were a number of staff who could focus on each curriculum area without having to “double-up” as happened in smaller schools with less staff. The advantage of this was that teachers could focus on managing and developing one area of the curriculum rather than several.

Although involvement in the curriculum area was “negotiated” with the principal and DP, it appeared that team leaders were not always comfortable with the areas for which they were responsible. The DP reported that she was made in charge of the mathematics PAG this year, “by default, because no one else wanted mathematics and the principal said, ‘Well,
you take what’s left over,’ which I did.” This was not an area of strength for her and she mentioned that although she was able to undertake the majority of requirements in this area, she was not able to provide professional leadership in it. Her strength area was literacy, which she had previously been in charge of but this was now in the hands of another PAG member who wanted a change of curriculum focus. It seemed that the system was to rotate people around the PAGs with leaders moving in and out of curriculum areas of responsibility sometimes on a yearly basis in order to experience a wide range of curricula. One PAG leader described her feelings of being in charge of an area she was not strong in as, “Going backwards…my strength is in science…what do I know about PE?”

However, the leaders stated in the interview that they were pushing for a review of the system. They felt there would be greater consistency within a curriculum area and opportunity for groups to build on their expertise and management of a particular curriculum area if leaders were able to “stay in one place longer.” The principal also mentioned the need for a review of this system.

PAGs were allotted times at staff meetings to share and address policy reviews, the annual plan or new curricula ideas with their colleagues. PAGs also attended Board of Trustee meetings as a team to present their policies, budgets, goals and directions for the year. The principal considered it important for the teachers involved in the planning and implementation of a curriculum area. “To own the whole process rather than do the work behind the scenes and have someone else interpret it for them.”

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

In order to understand the professional development focus in this school it was essential to address the school’s overall vision of learning and teaching for both students and teachers. The principal explained that the school was committed to an inquiry model approach to planning and teaching. She emphasised that this was so that:

*We are working in an integrated way, trying to make learning as authentic as possible and based around real issues and real situations rather than contrived, top-down topics chosen by the teacher.*

Students in this school were encouraged to take learning risks, ask questions, challenge ideas and work collaboratively to create and solve problems. Similarly, the principal and DP explained that the process was the same for their teachers who were also encouraged to be risk-takers, inquirers, challengers and team players. Both senior management leaders considered professional development to be a vital component of the school’s growth as a “learning community.”

The professional development of teachers in this school, therefore, was highly valued and significant time and resources were set-aside for this purpose. The DP commented on the importance of professional development within the school stating, “Because we value PD so much we make it very clear when we hire staff that it has a huge emphasis in our school and that this is a requirement not a wish.”

At the beginning of each year before the start of the first term, the school held a retreat, which usually occurred over several days. It was here that collaborative review, discussion and debate occurred about the new Year policies, plans and practices. It was also used as a time to introduce new staff to the school “culture” and vision for learning and teaching.
Generally the emphasis was on whole-school professional development which could involve Ministry of Education development contracts, outside “experts” including advisers and outside contractors, or workshops by specific curriculum PAG members. One of the PAG leaders described the school’s philosophy on whole-school professional development and stated:

The school believes that it is important that everybody is trying out the same things and that you get a more unified group situation with people counting on each other. This doesn’t always happen when individuals go off to courses on their own. The ideas become isolated and unconnected with others.

Much professional development had been undertaken on “learning” including learning styles, multiple intelligences, and De Bono’s six thinking hats. These influences were clearly seen in classroom programmes and practices. Release days throughout the year were budgeted for by the principal and the board to allow PAG members to critically review their curriculum area and plan for future development. Each PAG group had a release day to do this. The principal described these days as important, “forming a common understanding between teachers of what they want to achieve in their curriculum area for the staff and for the children.”

As a result of these days such things as goals for the group, planning for future professional development with staff and justification for any budgetary spending were developed. This was then negotiated with the principal and DP and presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Each week staff were given a reading to work on individually based on a current whole-school professional development topic or area of interest. The principal generally provided these but others were invited to source readings and share them with the staff. If a specific curriculum area was a focus, a PAG may be asked to help provide readings. Each reading had suggested areas for staff to consider or reflect on and key questions were provided for focused reading purposes. The topic or theme could run over a number of weeks and booklets were formed at the end of the period for ongoing reference. Each Friday, there was a staff meeting before school (separate from the weekly administration staff meeting) where teachers discussed and debated the key ideas and issues in the article. Topics which had been covered in-depth recently included literacy, assessment and gifted education. Because the school was becoming involved in the Ministry of Education Early Numeracy Project in the following year, a focus for the Friday discussions would be in this area.

Personal professional development of teachers was largely linked to their appraisal goals. Each teacher had individual professional development money allocated to them each year by the board. Teachers chose their own “critical friends” as appraisers and together they set goals and targets for future development based on the interim standards and their own needs/interests. Currently, a critical friend can be another Scale A teacher and sometimes a team or PAG leader was chosen. The principal and DP or team leaders did not at this stage appear to act as appraisers, although they did have access to the appraisal reports which were digitally collected. During the PAG interview one of the teachers made the link between her role as a curriculum leader and a teacher’s professional development goals. She commented:
I am able to help and support a staff member with a particular appraisal goal if it is in my curriculum area. Things like methods of curriculum delivery in the classroom, resources, and PD help.

The school’s appraisal system was currently under review as the senior management felt that there may not be enough “rigor” in the appraisal structure. The principal commented that although she did not want to push “the compliance stuff too much,” she felt that team leaders needed to have a bigger role in appraisals to ensure that “the basic requirements of the job are being met.” Team leaders also stated that they felt the current process was sometimes a little “general” and that it needed “to be formalised more and specifically connected to classroom practices.”

The impetus for this review was probably reflected in the ERO recommendation of greater consideration of quality assurance in school practices and implementations of policy and review.

2.3 Documents: School plans

When asked about the creation of school policies and plans, the principal reflected that because the school was “new from the ground up” she felt they had been given an advantage over other more established schools because, “we had no baggage, nothing in place which needed to get approval to be changed, we could start from scratch and build up.” Although this had meant a lot of groundwork at the start for senior management in particular, the principal felt that the school had been able to create a “truly collaborative vision which reflects our whole learning community.” According to the DP who was in this management role when the school began:

We pulled ideas from everywhere. I brought policies from my school and the principal did the same and we put them all together to create our own policies.

After seven years, many of these policies have been reviewed and changed. The school now reviewed all policies every year. The reviews were rostered in a yearly policy review plan, which the DP and one board member were responsible for undertaking. The policies were given to staff and the community for consideration and comment and then presented to the Board of Trustees for ratification. PAGs also were asked to review their particular policy each year and provide the DP with any changes or alterations they considered should be made. The DP explained that in order to manage such a big job each year, policies, which were similar, were reviewed at the same time so that links could be made between them. She stated that as a result, some policies, for instance, pupil attendance and truancy, had now been combined into one policy rather than two. Curriculum policies, she noted, were reviewed separately as it was felt they should not be combined.

It was interesting to note also that the school stored all its policies, planning, and assessment documentation digitally in an administration folder. There was little information collected on paper unless it was as a backup to what was stored and used electronically. All teachers had access to the digital “package” as the school referred to this system, and were expected to use it for all their planning, and assessment as well as school-wide documentation and data collection requirements which were also housed in the administration folder.
The school had a strategic plan, which was the overall plan for all school organisation. Compliance with the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) was alluded to in interviews with the principal and DP but as a copy of the strategic plan was not available it was difficult to state how this was done. This was stored digitally and all teachers had easy access to it.

It was explained that the school was currently reviewing their strategic plan. The key areas for review, such as curriculum, property, finance and school foci were on a large whiteboard in the staff room and staff were being asked to “place postie suggestions under each area for consideration and discussion.” The strategic review was also being discussed at team level, and in PAGs where teams were being asked to critically reflect on their roles, expectations and needs. As the DP explained:

_We are being asked, “To justify what we are doing and why? And how we are improving learning for children in our areas of responsibility?”_

The DP further mentioned that the review process was a big job which both she and the principal were taking some time to come to grips with. She noted that neither she herself nor the principal had a great deal of experience in this area of school management. Once again, the ERO report recommendations mentioned earlier were possibly the reason for the school’s focus in this area. The principal also mentioned the need for this overall plan to encompass how, when and how often they would collect school-wide information on achievement for planning and reporting purposes. This was possibly further evidence of the influence of the ERO recommendations for quality assurance in planning and reporting practices and procedures.

Each curriculum PAG also developed a yearly annual plan which set out the goals, tasks, responsibilities, and the time-frame by which goals and tasks would be achieved; in addition, the budget and resources and when the review of goals would be undertaken. This plan was presented to the board by the PAG at the end of each school year so that financial requests for professional development initiatives and resources in the following year could be considered and budgeted for. Although a direct link back to the strategic plan was not mentioned in interviews, it was probable that the bigger organisational school picture provided by the strategic plan would influence these annual plans. They, too, were stored digitally for use by all teachers.

There was a delivery of curriculum statement, which provided an overview of what the expectations for curriculum delivery were in the school. _The New Zealand Curriculum Framework_ was mentioned in this statement as forming a basis for all curriculum delivery at the school. The national curriculum statements were also noted as providing the basis for a balanced programme of learning for students. The need for monitoring and reporting of planning and assessment practices to the Board of Trustees was mentioned, as was the adequate resourcing of curriculum areas by the principal and board. There was no specific mention of the NAGs.

Curriculum implementation plans were provided for individual areas of the curriculum. There was no obvious link to the delivery of curriculum statement. Most implementation plans provided an introduction section, which outlined the school’s general expectations for this area of student learning. All plans stated aims for the curriculum area, and guidelines for how these aims would be achieved. Some plans had a conclusion, which appeared to be
a general statement about the curriculum area. For instance, the written language implementation plan stated:

Written language is not learned in isolation and the language programme cannot be considered by itself. Language is part of the whole school curriculum and its quality will depend on the quality of the rest of that curriculum. It is the medium in which children think and work, and the quality of the language will reflect the quality of that thought and that work.

Again, it was explained that all implementation plans were currently under review by senior management and PAG teams, and their format would possibly change to a more “consistent” model once the review process was completed.

In the mathematics curriculum area, the PAG team had recently developed a junior and senior overview plan, which set out implementation choices for teachers. The purpose of this plan, the DP explained that it provided “options for teachers but also to allow for consistent coverage of the mathematical strands.”

She noted that the English curriculum area was being organised similarly, providing choices for teachers but stating which areas needed to be covered. Both these plans were accessed and utilised electronically by teachers.

In addition, this year the principal had developed a planning and assessment guidelines sheet. This provided teachers with guidelines of the school expectations in these two areas and as well as a plan for how much time should be spent weekly in the numeracy and literacy areas of the curriculum. The principal stressed that this was only to be used as a guide and she did not expect her teachers “to get out their calculators to check they have planned enough time for each area.” However, she viewed these guidelines as providing some assurance in that “we are actually going to get coverage of the curriculum.” The principal anticipated some resistance from staff when she presented these guidelines to them but found little opposition, especially from the younger teachers on the staff, who stated that they were pleased to have some guidance and structure for their planning and teaching. Other curriculum areas apparently ran on a two-year, odd and even annual plan with major and minor foci in each strand.

Generally, the multi-level teams developed long-term plans co-operatively, although this was not mandatory and individual teachers were able to develop their own plans if they wished. These plans were expected to link back to the implementation plans, the numeracy and literacy overviews and the planning and assessment guidelines. From interviews with team leaders it appeared that they had mixed experiences in this area. The composition of some of the multi-level teams seemed to influence how well they were able to work co-operatively on planning and assessment. For instance, one team leader commented that she was unable to effectively plan with others in her group because she was the only one at her level (she was teaching a senior level and all others in her team were juniors). Instead, she either talked to teachers at her level in other teams about their planning and assessment or she planned on her own. However, because she was the team leader she still had to organise planning meetings with her group of teachers. This meant some “double-handling” of work for her which she found somewhat frustrating. Another leader explained how her group had developed their long-term plan:

We decide on the curriculum areas we are going to cover in a term and then all take a curriculum area to plan. This means we have the term outline planned.
and we can then adjust and change according to the needs of our class. It makes it a lot less time consuming.

It would appear then that there was quite a variance in practices amongst the teams and this was something the leaders stated that they would like to see reviewed. As one leader commented:

*We are all supportive of the multi-level concept but I think we wish that the composition of the groups could allow for more support for teachers at similar levels. It seems to work for some and not others.*

### 2.4 Resources: Allocations and policies

The school appeared to be well stocked with resources across the curriculum. As the school was only seven years old, equipment and resources were relatively new and up-to-date. A particular feature was the partnership the school had with Apple computers who provided the school with a wide range of state-of-the-art hardware and resources. ICT was a large focus in the school and they provided professional development for many “Apple Bus Tours” through the school. The aim of these “tours” was to share with other schools and interested parties how these resources could be effectively integrated into the school’s learning programmes.

As stated earlier, PAG teams had responsibility for budgeting of resources in each of their curriculum areas. During a release day provided for each PAG, planning for the year was organised and what the principal called a kind of “wish list” of resources was developed. The group prioritised the list and set the budget around this. The budget was then presented to the principal and the board for consideration.

This year, the principal had asked the PAGs to take a more in-depth look at this process as she was concerned that in the past:

*We have been guilty of thinking, “Oh we have all this money in our budget, what can we buy?” I don’t think there is enough emphasis at the moment on backing up this wish list with facts - with data to justify the spending.*

As a result, the principal was asking each PAG to critically reflect on their budgeting processes. The teams were being asked to “really consider what they require and why,” rather than “what they think they want.” Submissions by each PAG would then be considered by all the staff and ultimately, the senior management, before any money was spent. Each PAG would then be required to present their “case” to the Board of Trustees for their consideration stating their justifications for the request. The principal also emphasised the need for the school to make greater links to overall school achievement information and resource spending so that “gaps can be filled in areas of need for student learning.”

It appeared then that finance for resources was held in a central pool which was allocated after the “negotiation” process by each PAG had been completed. As the principal noted:

*I have told the staff that I don’t care what PAG you are in, you are a teacher who teaches every subject, so we need to look at where the greatest need is in the school.*
It may be that the stimulus for the review by management of this process was again related to the ERO recommendations for greater quality assurance systems to monitor the implementation of all school practices.

As stated earlier, the PAGs also had responsibility for developing the school’s annual plan each year and this included consideration of resources and budgets for that area.

2.5 Assessment policy

As indicated earlier, all planning and assessment information was collected digitally on the school “package.” There was also an assessment policy, which followed the same format as other policies described earlier. This was being updated so that it would be in line with the changes being made to the school assessment systems. With a school-wide emphasis on numeracy and literacy, efforts were being made to upgrade assessment processes and practices in both these areas. One way the school was doing this was through the planning and assessment guidelines, which the principal had recently introduced. The guidelines were housed in the administration folder and every teacher had access to them.

The school has been using, since its inception, a student-based assessment (SBA) package, which was developed by the senior management and staff at that time. This was based on the levels and curriculum achievement objectives. Specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria were developed from the achievement objectives for use in each curriculum area. One PAG leader described the package as:

Breaking down the actual achievement objectives into smaller chunks so they are not so broad and we can plan and teach smaller steps.

The objectives and outcomes had also been written in “children’s words” so that they could “understand and use them too.” These objectives and criteria were available electronically for all teachers to use when planning and assessing. However, the principal commented that the package was currently under review and was being refined by staff to make it more up-to-date, user-friendly, and relevant to the school’s current requirements. The need to have specific and consistent data school-wide on student achievement for planning and reporting purposes was mentioned as one reason for the change.

Collaborative assessment days were organised by the principal for the purpose of updating the SBAs, the English curriculum being tackled first. During these days, staff at similar levels were released to spend time looking at the English curriculum strands and to create specific learning objectives for their level. As one PAG member explained:

We have looked at every strand, we’ve looked at what is achievable at each level, and we’ve put them into terms that we know we can do including extension ideas.

The principal stressed that the emphasis was on providing a “flow” from one level to the next so that expectations and outcomes were clear, easily monitored, and analysed.

Another area of review related to the collection and analysis of student achievement information from standardised testing such as progressive achievement tests and school entry assessment tests as well as children’s reading and writing achievement levels. The principal wanted:
To develop standardised benchmarks at the start of each year which can be used for ongoing learning needs as well as for comparisons at the end of the year across levels in the school.

At the classroom level teachers generally implemented a variety of assessment techniques both of a summative and formative nature. These were either stored digitally for use in future planning and reporting or kept in a workbook for ongoing data collection and use. Students were involved in goal setting and self-assessment based on the student-based achievement criteria discussed earlier. With classroom assessment information being available electronically, team leaders and senior management had access to it at all times. It was the responsibility of team leaders to ensure that their teachers were kept up-to-date with entering assessment data throughout the year as required by the school. Once a term they were required to give teachers feedback on their planning and assessment. This feedback was then sent electronically to the principal so that she was kept informed. Team leaders also monitored planning and assessment during team meetings, at times getting teachers to bring samples of assessed work to share, to ensure consistency across classes. However, when teams had a variety of levels, this could be more difficult. Teachers sometimes did this kind of moderation across teams with staff at similar levels.

At the end of each year, information on student achievement and levels in mathematics and for reading and spelling was passed on digitally to the next teacher. A hard copy folder of relevant assessments in literacy and numeracy, PATs or SEA results, and some formalised pre- and post-tests was also provided for the next year’s teacher.

Reporting achievement and progress to parents was undertaken in a variety of ways. In the second term, parent-teacher interviews were held, and in term four, a three-way conference was held between the parent, the student and teacher. It was aimed at providing students with the opportunity to celebrate their year’s work with their parents. Students were expected to explain their goals, their achievements, and their aims for the future during these conversations. Information was presented to parents in a variety of ways through what the school called “the student’s reflective learning collection.” This could include digital examples of work as well as particular exercise books or work on the classroom wall. The DP explained the process:

*We encourage the children to look for work which shows the progress they have made and the goals they have set. It is not just a collection of their best work.*

A written report of about 1500 words went out to parents once a year in the third term. This format was also under review at the time of interview as the school was undertaking a comprehensive re-evaluation of so many of its systems. Teacher feedback about the report had indicated that some found the report too large while others believed it did not suit the school’s “inquiry” approach to learning. Accommodating the essential skills was another area that the school wanted to address in the report.

### 3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

#### 3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

Individual PAGs were responsible for the review and implementation of school-wide curriculum policies and plans. Team leaders (who were generally PAG leaders) were responsible for overseeing that teachers’ programmes were covering what the school required. The principal had overall authority for all curriculum policy and practice but
allowed each PAG to work autonomously in order to provide “ownership” of the work they did.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

It has already been stated that co-operative team planning did not always occur due to the rather mixed composition of some of the multi-level groups. However, the school-wide focus on inquiry learning and the use of “big idea” themes usually resulted in teams or individuals planning around this idea.

Examples of inquiry learning focus

As discussed in an earlier section, the school had a big focus on inquiry learning and this involved the integration of curriculum into “big idea” themes or contexts, which generally ran for a term at a time. The DP explained the process as:

Looking at the umbrella idea and thinking of all the experiences you could possibly bring to it and then going to the curriculum document and “fitting” the objectives around the idea rather than the other way around.

There was an emphasis on “authentic” learning experiences with teachers being encouraged to look to the “real-world” for inspiration. An example of this was suggested by the principal:

We always start the year with “The Psychology of Learning.” Here the children are involved in exploring things like what it means to be a learner, what kind of learner they are, how others learn, and learning from mistakes.

The “big idea” context may run longer than a term if a class was particularly involved in an investigation.

The planning of these school-wide “big idea” topics was undertaken at team or individual classroom level. Plans could be developed electronically using the school unit-planning format or on large pieces of brown paper as one PAG member noted was her experience. Planning usually took the form of a brainstorm of ideas incorporating all the curriculum areas, which seem to “fit” and took into consideration the school curriculum requirements for the term.

A PAG leader shared another example of an inquiry unit. She explained that her team had “decided to do an art performance based around the ‘memories’ big idea topic for that term.” Together they brainstormed all the curriculum areas they wanted to cover with a particular emphasis on the arts. One of the classes decided to look at myths as forms of memories and in particular the creation myth of New Zealand. Other classes in this team worked in with this theme and together created a successful performance of their own creation myth involving art, dance Māori and technology. The planning for this performance and other curriculum areas such as English and Art were all planned collectively, each team member taking responsibility for planning a specific curriculum area for the rest of the team.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

The teachers used various documents such as the national curriculum documents in the form of the school’s student-based assessment (SBA) package, Ministry of Education
supplementary handbooks, the school planning and assessment guidelines, and long-term plans to assist them in developing their inquiry units and daily classroom programmes. Classroom planning, as stated previously, was based on the school-wide inquiry theme each term. Teachers planned co-operatively with their multi-level group either in pairs of teachers across teams, or individually.

The teacher interviewed for this case study talked of her belief that the curriculum provided opportunities for her children “to learn the essential skills and knowledge needed to survive in a world that is forever changing.” She stressed that she felt the documents and achievement objectives were broad enough to encompass any theme or context in her inquiry learning planning, but that for her, it was the essential skills, which were paramount for “steering children towards what they will need to face the 21st Century world.”

The emphasis on essential skills was noted throughout conversations with all staff at this school. The principal commented that she wanted the skills to feature more prominently and consistently throughout all school-wide planning, assessment, and reporting. The PAGs were currently exploring how to combine the essential skills more effectively into their curriculum areas. The stumbling block, however, generally appeared to be assessment, as explained by the principal, “although teachers and students can assess many skills, some are not suitable as they require subjective assessment rather than concrete proof.”

*Example: Classroom observation and interview*

The teacher observed and interviewed saw her role in the implementation of school curriculum policies as a “learning facilitator” who balanced the classroom programme between some “chalk and talk” and some independent inquiry experiences. She emphasised the importance of integrating the learning experiences for her children, so that they were “able to make connections between subjects and ideas.”

This teacher planned co-operatively with her team. Together they decided on the long-term plan for their group, which was stored electronically. She remarked that she was “lucky” because her all in her team were all at a similar level, which meant they were able to split the unit planning up between them:

*We start by sitting around the table and talking about what we want from the unit, how it will fit with the theme for the term and what areas we need to assess from the school guidelines. We might brainstorm a whole lot of ideas under the chosen curriculum headings and when we all have an idea we go away and plan our area, and then present it to the group at the next meeting.*

From the combined plans, she was then able to alter or add anything that she considered as being necessary for her class. At times she used the learning outcomes provided but at other times she would create her own to meet her individual children’s needs. The unit plans were also housed digitally so that team leaders and management had access to them. The only curriculum area which they did not plan jointly was mathematics, as guidelines for implementation were provided in the mathematics overview.

If the teacher was undertaking an inquiry unit with her children she explained that she began by spending about half a day “giving the children the prior knowledge they will need so I can build on to this.” She also conducted pre-tests or activities to find out what the
children knew about the topic and then planned instructional groups from these results. She did this primarily in mathematics and English, planning in these areas being described as perhaps more structured than it was in other curriculum areas “because they were her focus.” Her weekly planning, also written electronically, showed a big emphasis in these two areas. In the other curriculum areas such as science or social studies, her children generally worked on group or independent inquiries.

Assessment practices were predominately formative. The teacher stated she did, “a lot of observing and talking. I have a lot of class discussions talking about what we’ve learnt and making links back to previous learning.” She also did post-tests in mathematics and sometimes in other curriculum areas such as science and social studies. This information was kept in a number of different places. She had individual manila folders for students called “profiles” with samples of work in them, and individual student benchmark folders that housed the children’s assessment information such as pre- and post-tests, running records, and progressive assessment tests. From the benchmark folder, children selected results which they were proud of to share at this conference also.

The children also worked on creating digital portfolios which would be shared with parents at the three-way conference in the third term. These portfolios included project investigation presentations and artwork. A selection of work from all of these sources would be put together by the teacher and student to become their “reflective learning collection.” The teacher mentioned that before the conference the children would “practise” how they wanted to run the session so that it went smoothly when their parent/s/caregivers were present.

ICT played a prominent role in the classroom with the children confidently using the Internet for searching project information and computer graphics programmes for presentation of findings as well as digital cameras for interviews and presentations. During the classroom observation, children were in the last stages of completing presentations of their work for the term in order to share at a school assembly. Some children were working on group research projects and all children spoken to had a pretty clear idea of what they were doing and why. The assessment criteria for the group projects had been negotiated with the teacher, who explained that this was the usual procedure and the children knew that she would, if necessary, add other criteria (from the school SBAs). Work displayed around the room showed evidence of reflective practice from the students with some in-depth self-assessment comments on their completed projects.

The teacher used a range of resources to help her planning. She stated that the TKI site was very useful, particularly English Online. Ministry of Education supplementary books in science and mathematics she used frequently also. The school’s comprehensive professional development opportunities were very valuable according to this teacher. She stressed that this emphasis meant, “You are forever reflecting on what you do, why you do it and how you can do it better…in the end that’s got to be good for the kids.”

4.0 Discussion of findings

This school appeared to be in a state of transition through the widespread school reviews, which were occurring in many areas of policy and procedures. Although there were undoubtedly sound curriculum management systems in place, many of these seemed under review (in that they were being altered or changed). This made getting a clear picture of
these processes somewhat difficult for an outsider. What was clear was that the senior management team was aiming to make systems and procedures within the school more “accountable” but without compromising the “collegial ethos” which the school had built up over the seven years it had been open. It is most likely that the impetus for many of these changes had been the 2002 ERO recommendations which emphasised the need for the school to develop greater quality assurance in monitoring and implementation of all school practices.

It was not clear whether the school’s current curriculum policies and procedures had a direct link to the NAGs. Certainly the school addressed The New Zealand Curriculum Framework in its delivery of the curriculum policy and the curriculum documents were used for planning and assessment purposes in classrooms. The development of the SBA (student-based achievement) electronic package had provided teachers with a resource which included the achievement objectives from the documents and specific learning outcomes as devised by the school senior management. They were required to use this resource in their classroom planning and assessment. However, it was explained that the original SBA resource was now considered somewhat “bulky” and seemed not particularly user-friendly. The principal wanted to create a similar package, which would be more standardised and consistent across all levels and curriculum. This meant a great deal of work for the staff who were being released to work on new criteria across the curriculum at their class levels. This process was an ongoing one with numeracy and literacy first being targeted. As each area was reviewed, implementation plans were also being updated. The principal wanted consistency in these plans across curriculum areas. There was an obvious push for greater consistency and standardisation in school and classroom policies and practices, which may be connected to the ERO recommendations as well normal school review processes.

Across all staff interviewed, there was strong emphasis on the importance of the essential skills in planning and programming. The school was currently beginning to explore ways to incorporate the skills more meaningfully in planning and assessment including the revamping of the school report to include a greater emphasis on essential skills. The school’s “inquiry learning” focus linked to this emphasis on the essential skills with students being encouraged to work independently and collaboratively on research projects that incorporated meaningful, real-world contexts. Much of the programming in classrooms was around the school’s “big idea” themes, which generally changed once a term. In this multi-disciplinary approach, the emphasis was for the integration of the curriculum so that children were exposed to links between subjects rather than isolated “chunks.” Planning for these themes was collaborative or individual. There appeared some dissatisfaction with the current multi-level grouping organisation, as some teams were disjointed in the composition. Team leaders expressed difficulties for some teachers in planning when the rest of their team were at a completely different class level to themselves, resulting in some teachers feeling somewhat isolated or spending a lot of time meeting with other teachers in other teams at their level to plan a unit of work. There were similar repercussions when teams tried to moderate their assessment practices and one member was at a very different level to the rest.

The PAG system seemed generally supported by staff although once again this organisation was about to come under review. It was clear from interviews with PAG leaders that they enjoyed their management role but some had difficulty with the process by which areas of
curriculum responsibility were allotted. The case study showed that some PAG personnel were in charge of areas in which they did not feel confident, particularly when it came to providing professional development assistance to others. As this was part of their responsibility, there did not seem to be a need for re-assessment of the process, the leaders explaining that they felt there would be greater consistency and growth in curriculum areas if they were able to be responsible for areas of “expertise” and interest for longer periods of time.

Professional development was a big focus in the school with much time and money being spent on the development of the professional practice and growth of teachers. A particular feature was the reading group, which occurred each Friday before school. All the teachers interviewed valued this time and found the focused discussions and debate challenging and helpful to their classroom practice. The association raised by the principal between the learning needs of the students and the professional development needs of the staff were interesting and linked directly to the school’s goal of creating a learning community for all.

As with many of the other school systems, an element of “accountability” was creeping into the appraisal process, which was also being reviewed. The current system was seen as being a little “loose” by senior management and required tightening up in terms of “who” would undertake the appraisals. The principal appeared to be in some conflict over wanting her staff to have “choice” yet also wanting to meet the compliance requirements of the “interim standards.”

The school was well resourced with the Apple connection providing a wealth of ICT hardware and expertise. It was clear that the school used computerised systems confidently and extensively for housing all school documentation. Teachers and students utilised ICT in an integral fashion in the classroom with some very impressive results in work presentations. Teachers used the networked “package” to plan and assess their classroom programmes. The school was currently working on updating the package so that it could provide more consistent and useful school-wide as well as classroom-based information on student achievement. Resource money was kept in a central pool and allocated after negotiation with the principal. Greater emphasis on “why” a PAG considered it required money for certain projects or equipment was sought by the principal who wanted staff to become more accountable for the money spent.

All assessment information was kept electronically and could be viewed by team leaders and senior management. As well it appeared that teachers had hard copy folders and profiles of students’ progress. Both electronic and paper information was passed on to the teacher in the following year with further streamlining of the system planned once the school ‘package’ was completed. The school-wide collection of assessment information was a focus and systems were being developed to provide more standardised evaluation of results. Teachers appeared to use a range of assessment practices and there was emphasis on student involvement in setting learning goals and self-assessment. The teacher being observed and interviewed placed high priority on giving meaningful feedback to her students. The reporting system in the school provided a range of opportunities for parent/s/caregivers to be informed about their child’s progress. The three-way conference in the third term was an innovative way of encouraging the children to take responsibility for their own learning through sharing and explaining their work with their parent/s/caregivers. The emphasis was on celebration of successes but children were also
expected to discuss their future learning goals as well. The written report was under review with the school wanting to reflect the inquiry learning focus and the essential skills more meaningfully. The overall impression of what was happening at this school was one of intensive and widespread change and review with an emphasis on providing greater consistency across school and classroom policies and procedures. The principal explained:

_We are constantly reviewing and reworking everything in the school. Like our planning and assessment packages never stay the same, we are always looking at it and trying to find a better way to do it. I think that’s critical with curriculum, too. Our understandings of things as individuals and as a school are very different now than they were seven years ago._

5.0 Summary

- The school was seven years old and was in partnership with a computer company.
- It was well resourced with an emphasis on the integration of ICT into school and classroom programmes and practices.
- A large number of school organisational procedures were under review or were being changed including management of the curriculum.
- An ERO report in 2002 recommended the school review, its quality assurance procedures and practices. This has probably been a factor in the push for greater consistency and standardisation of policies and programmes across the school.
- There were no clear links to the NAGs in the policies or procedures viewed in this case study;
- Policies and curriculum implementation plans acknowledged _The New Zealand Curriculum Framework_ and the essential learning areas.
- The principal was new to this role, though not the school, having been out of the classroom for only a year. The DP had only just become non-teaching. Both were foundation staff of the school.
- There was a strong emphasis on inquiry learning, the essential skills and integrated curriculum in the school philosophy, practices and classroom programmes.
- Collaborative management across the school was a feature, all change being a team effort.
- Curriculum and team leaders were generally the same people.
- Difficulties with the multi-level team organisation and the allocation of curriculum area responsibilities for PAG leaders were being reviewed by senior management and staff.
- Professional development of staff was highly valued by the school, considerable time and money being allocated for these purposes. Staff were highly supportive and appreciative.
- Curriculum budgets and finances were managed by PAG leaders who “negotiated” their spending with the principal and the Board of Trustees. Greater emphasis on accountability of spending in curriculum areas was currently being discussed across the school.
Classroom teachers used the curriculum documents for planning units of study. The school SBA package provided achievement objectives and specific learning outcomes devised by the school. This was currently being reviewed and changed.

Teachers used a range of assessment practices and techniques; school-wide assessment was being updated to provide for greater standardisation and consistency for analysis and aggregation of trends and “gaps.”

Systems for reporting to parents provided a range of opportunities for sharing of progress and achievement. The three-way conference was innovative and provided students with the chance to take responsibility for their learning.

Everything seemed to be “under review.”

FP6: A small full primary school near a regional city

1.0 Description

This school was a small, decile 5, full primary (Year 0-8) school situated near a regional city. The student population of 88 children was made up of 45% Pakeha; 48% Māori; and a small number of students of other nationalities. It was a four-teacher school, with a teaching principal. The school was structured with four composite classes, Years 0-1, Years 2-3, Years 4-5, and Years 6, 7, and 8. The management team involved the principal who had been at the school for seven years, and a deputy principal who was appointed in 2001. The principal taught two and a half days a week in the Year 6, 7 and 8 class and had release for the rest of the week. The principal acknowledged that due to the small size of the school, “everyone has to take on a leadership role at one time or another.” She saw this as a blessing and a hindrance at times:

_I would say it is difficult in a smaller school to get the specialisation and range of expertise from individuals. So we all have to wear many hats...but in the end I believe this is a feature of our school, sharing is part of our day-to-day culture._

Similarly, students at this school were encouraged to take on leadership roles. The school’s motto, “Strive to achieve” indicated this ethos. As the principal stated:

_Our Board of Trustees likes to think that our children will grab every opportunity to take on some kind of leadership role. In a school with less than a 100 students, those opportunities are probably more prevalent than in a larger school._

The latest ERO report published in early 2002, stated that a feature of the school was the strong professional leadership provided by the principal and the collective shared strengths of a highly committed staff. Students received a range of experiences in each of the essential learning areas and programmes challenged student group and individual thinking. It was stated also that school-wide expectations for student attitudes to learning and behaviour was a focus of the entire school community.

A focus for future development mentioned by the principal was that of investigating how to meaningfully incorporate the essential skills and integration of the curriculum into classroom programmes in order to get away from what she saw as a heavy reliance on the curriculum documents:
2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management team of principal and deputy principal provided the overall guidance and management of curriculum in the school. The principal envisaged her role in curriculum policy and management as:

Providing the scaffold (clear policies, plans and guidelines) to make it easy for the staff to get on with the teaching and at the same time provide flexibility and scope to do what they need to do within the classroom.

The DP, having only been at the school one year, stated that he was still “finding his way” in the management of curriculum. However, he stated that he had already introduced the school-wide long-term plan and the planning and assessment formats which the school was trialling with the aim of creating a more standardised system in these areas. The need for standardisation school-wide, he suggested, was for “monitoring purposes so that we can assure coverage and that all the objectives are being met.”

Generally the Year 0-3 teachers planned and worked together leaving the upper levels to do the same. However, some whole-school foci occurred during the year, with individual teachers choosing topics from within the focus theme. The importance of flexibility and individual teacher interest in planning curriculum programmes was stressed by all interviewed. For example, a junior teacher mentioned that often planning was not done co-operatively because the level in which she was working (Years 2-3) was so different to the other in the junior school (Years 0-1). Being able to “bounce ideas off” with others more often was something she missed from previous experiences in a larger school:

If you were in a larger school there would probably be four other people in the syndicate so there would be things to share, but here there is only “me.”

As part of the principal’s goal to provide teachers with “time to teach and plan,” meetings were kept to a minimum with only one staff meeting of 45 minutes a week. Teachers were then free to choose to have other curriculum/planning meetings as they deemed necessary. The principal noted that due to the small number of staff at the school that much planning and organisation happened “incidentally during the school day.” Management meetings were set down for each week but could vary depending on the current needs. Many issues were dealt with during the day as they arose.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

The school generally had several curriculum foci for the year and it was here that the majority of professional development money was targeted towards. Set by the Board of Trustees, the money was kept in a central pool. It was then allocated to the school-wide foci and towards individual professional development areas as indicated by teachers during their appraisal. Staff negotiated individual professional development with the principal. The emphasis appeared to be on school-wide rather than individual development. However, the principal stressed that the board was generally very supportive of “extras” requested by the staff.
It appeared that the school had been involved in a number of Ministry of Education curriculum contracts and used local advisers for additional professional development as required. At the time of interview, the school was involved in the Ministry’s ICT Professional Development Lead School Project, the Early and Advanced Numeracy projects and the arts contract. The value of sharing new ideas gained from professional development days with other staff was mentioned by one interviewee. However, it was also stated that it was not always possible due to the busy nature of the school.

2.3 Documents: School plans

As stated earlier, the senior management provided the overall guidance for the development and maintenance of the school curriculum policies and plans. However, staff and the Board of Trustees were consulted and encouraged to have input into the development of new policies and plans.

Any new curriculum policies were generally developed by the principal and the deputy principal who brainstormed ideas then presented the draft to the staff for comment. This was usually done on a teacher-only day. This then went to the board for discussion, explanation and ratification. Responsibilities for curriculum management, for example, policy review and resources were generally shared amongst the staff based on their interest or strength in the curriculum area. Their role was to provide advice for staff in terms of resourcing and planning. Policies were reviewed as per the five-year school self-review plan which was incorporated into the school strategic plan. This plan set out specifically the areas of focus for development and spending over a four-year period. However, if during the year an issue or problem occurred requiring a review of a policy before it was due, then this would also be undertaken. The management believed that the ability to be responsive to immediate needs like this was a feature of being in a small school.

The school strategic plan linked to the yearly development plan. The “development plan” was guided directly by the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). The Curriculum development for 2002, for example, showed the school’s overall foci on numeracy and literacy, ICT, school in-service on the arts document, development of the Māori Achievement plan (the only recommendation from the last ERO report), as well as participation in the national exemplar project. Policies to review were the enrolment procedures, individual records and reporting student progress. This plan was developed by the management team and subsequently discussed with staff.

There was a generic curriculum delivery policy which acknowledged the NAGs, the Curriculum Framework and the national curriculum statements. It also set out guidelines for the school’s expectations for curriculum delivery into classroom programmes. Implementation plans for each curriculum area provided the framework for how these expectations would be incorporated into the classroom. Expectations of planning, assessment, programme structure, school organisation as well as resource and budget provision were included in each plan. However, the principal and deputy principal noted that the format of these plans were “fluid” at the moment, with the DP trialling a new format which they would like to see standardised throughout all the policies eventually. These plans were developed by the principal and the DP and given to staff members to discuss.
Each curriculum implementation plan had an overview which provided the teacher with the term-by-term strand and achievements objectives which must be covered. The essential skills did not appear to be included on the overview sheets. The English overview sheet had been provided by the school advisers as a kind of “Blackline Master” for schools to follow and/or modify; similarly, for mathematics. The principal noted that these had been used for some years now and that it was time they were revised. The format was under review, the purpose being to standardise each curriculum overview. The reasoning behind this linked to the earlier comment made by the DP regarding monitoring of the school systems as well as ease of use for staff.

The DP then developed the long-term plan which linked directly to the overview of each curriculum area. Numeracy and literacy were “set” in terms of what should be covered and when (from the overview); however topic choices in areas such as science, social studies and technology were generally discussed and decided upon by the staff. There was flexibility for individual and group areas of focus within the strand and topic choice. For this reason, it was explained that the plan appeared very general with headings only, and little, if any, detail. Greater detail was expected in the unit plan developed by each teacher.

The staff all had a folder within which were all relevant policies, guidelines and plans for each curriculum area. When new policies were developed or old ones revised, the books were collected in and brought up-to-date.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

The teachers responsible for each curriculum area had resourcing, planning and policy responsibilities. As stated earlier, each year there was money set aside for the key school-wide curriculum areas of focus, earmarked for professional development and resourcing in these areas. The only money set for specific allocation in the school strategic plan was in areas such as ICT and property. It was noted that curriculum areas remained more “flexible” in this area so that the school could be responsive to ongoing needs and requirements as they occurred. Whatever money was left over could then be allocated to “other” curriculum areas (for resources, professional development). The teacher in charge of the curriculum area could “negotiate” with the principal for resources or professional development where they believed resources were needed. As there was never enough money to do everything that the school would like to do, careful consideration was given to “each dollar spent.”

Curriculum policies were reviewed by the whole staff with teacher(s) in charge of each area taking a leadership role in this process. New policies were generally developed by or with the principal and DP and then disseminated for staff to consider and discuss by the teacher(s) in charge of the curriculum area.

The school appeared to be well resourced with many plans for further upgrading, particularly in the area of ICT.

2.5 Assessment policy

The principal reported to the Board of Trustees on curriculum every month. This planned reporting was closely linked to the assessment information collected during the year. Such things as progressive assessment tests, standard two surveys, running records, and mathematics test results were all analysed and the results shared with the board. The DP
was responsible for collecting and collating this data. The latest ERO report acknowledged the school’s good use of information to identify trends and patterns in student achievement, particularly in reading. The principal reported that the school was now aiming to collect and analyse information in areas other than numeracy and literacy more effectively in the future so that trends and patterns in student achievement could be tracked and resources and programmes put in place to “fill the gaps” identified. Currently it was felt these other areas were monitored on a more “ad hoc” basis.

The school had an assessment guide sheet which set out what the expectations were for the collection of assessment information and reporting to parents during the course of the school year. There was a general assessment policy statement outlining the national and school expectations for assessment and reporting. Individual curriculum assessment expectations were covered in the implementation planning sheets for each area.

The collection of assessment information occurred in a systematic order through a portfolio system referred to as the school “sample book.” At the beginning of each term it was decided by the management team and staff what assessment data would be collected and placed in the sample book. This decision closely related to the long-term plan for each term and the key school-wide foci. The sample book was used as a repository of assessment work the children had done and was largely teacher-driven. The books went home to parents once a term and were then used in parent-teacher interviews as examples of students’ work and achievement. The principal noted that the development of these books over the last two years had been well received by the parents who enjoyed seeing their children’s work and being able to discuss it more meaningfully at interview time. Some examples of student self-assessments were also included. Occasionally the sample books were shared in staff or Year level meetings so that teachers could see and discuss similarities and differences in expectations and results. They were also collected in by the principal and DP at least once a year.

Each teacher also had an assessment book in which all class assessment records were kept and passed on to the next teacher. This was collected in about once a term by the principal. The book acted as an accumulative record for such things as reading and mathematics levels, as well as a checklist of the curriculum areas, levels and strands covered during the year. This was mentioned by the principal as:

*Important not only for the teachers but because the board are interested in checking what we cover. So this is a way of ensuring that we can see what we are covering and identify any gaps as the year goes.*

The principal was then able to “remind” staff of areas that they needed to cover. The information collected here is also used by the DP when analysing and aggregating school-wide data in different curriculum areas. He suggested that the results of this aggregation could be valuable as a “bargaining tool” with the board for money to implement new programmes or upgrade resources. The DP also mentioned that these books were used during teacher appraisals. He stated that he would talk to the teacher and they would “compare their planning and assessment with what is in the children’s sample book and see if they matched.”

Teachers unit plans and long-term overviews were also kept in this book (usually clipped in the front) along with the sample book assessment term sheet which served as a reminder of
what should be collected in each curriculum area and placed into the children’s sample books.

Reporting to parents appeared to be an ongoing process with an informal parent-teacher meeting in February, a formal parent interview in April and two other interview times in June and September “on request.” The June option coincided with a mid-year report and the September option was after the sample book had gone home giving parents the opportunity to discuss anything they saw in the book with the teacher. End-of-year reports went home with sample books in December.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

The teachers used the national curriculum documents, Ministry of Education handbooks, the school development plan, implementation plans, overviews and long-term plans to assist them in their classroom programme planning. ERO noted that the teachers set purposeful lessons with clear objectives and tasks in the areas of numeracy and literacy.

As stated earlier, due to the small size of the school, unit and day-to-day planning was generally done individually by teachers as best suited to their Year level. However, some collaboration occurred on whole-school topics or themes. Each teacher planned their unit around the curriculum area, level, achievement objectives and theme or topic suggested in the implementation overview and long-term plan.

Example: Mathematics lesson in a Year 2-3 class

I observed an afternoon mathematics lesson in this classroom of approximately 28 Year 2-3 children. The teacher worked part-time in the class in the afternoon undertaking Reading Recovery training in the morning. The unit topic was “Money” from the Measurement strand of the mathematics curriculum, which had been set down in the long-term plan to be covered this term. The teaching approach was that of whole class. The unit had not been going for long and the teacher stated her aim for this lesson was to get the children counting in dollar amounts up to two dollars, which they had not done before. When asked if she used instructional grouping as well as whole-class grouping, the teacher stated that she sometimes did this, depending on the topic or what she wanted to teach.

> Sometimes, if I see that they’re not picking something up, I draw them back to work with me.

At the end of the whole class session, the children were given two worksheets to do. Equipment (toy money) was available for those who needed it. The teacher explained that the purpose of the worksheet was to reinforce what they had been doing on the mat with her. It was observed that the children’s mathematics books contained a large number of glued-in worksheets. The teacher then roamed around the room monitoring children’s work and “keeping the peace” over “fair” allocation of the toy money. It appeared from my observations that a number of children may have found the worksheets very easy and were finished quickly whereas others appeared to be having major difficulty understanding what was required and reading the instructions. The teacher acknowledged later that some of the children might not have found the sheets particularly challenging and may have needed some more advanced activities. As the children completed the worksheet they lined up for the teacher to mark their work and give them verbal feedback. All children did not see the teacher by the end of the session and she told them she would look at their work the next day. The session was completed with the children coming back to the mat and some brief
feedback from the teacher as to what she had observed (generally) during the session. For example; how some children got down to work quickly and finished early and that how others may have had difficulty with the sheet, which she promised they would look at again the next day. They then lined up ready to go outside for a brief fitness session where they did some stretching exercises and played “Blob Tag.” The children were then brought back inside to tidy up and wait for the bell.

In the interview after the observation, the teacher stated that she had a very diverse group of students with a large number needing “hands on” learning activities in order to stay motivated. She talked of wanting to learn more about learning styles and intelligences in order to better meet these children’s varied needs. She also thought that integrating the curriculum, which the school was considering undertaking as professional development in 2003, would be a way of catering for all the curriculum requirements more effectively. She had not worked in this way previously.

When questioned about the curriculum, the teacher stated she believed it helped prepare students for life and job skills. Most importantly, at her level, the curriculum provided the “foundation for student’s reading and mathematics which gives them opportunities later in life.” Her role in implementing the curriculum was to “make sure that whatever is set down by the school is what I endeavour to teach, in a balanced way.” She also mentioned the need for her to be accountable for each student’s achievement and that this was accomplished through ensuring she kept ongoing assessment records up-to-date.

When planning a unit of study from the long-term plan, the teacher stated that she often started with gathering resources to meet the achievement objectives at her level (level 1 and level 2). The appropriate levels and achievement objectives were highlighted on the sheet and the learning experiences she planned often come from the resources she gathered. She noted that she had begun to use the Internet (TKI particularly) quite a lot to download plans and ideas as well as the “starters and strategies” booklet. She had begun to use the planning sheet provided by the DP which she conceded was “a good idea so that everyone is planning the same way.”

When asked about planning for the essential skills the teacher recognised that although they highlighted the skills they intended to cover on the unit planning sheet, generally the school had yet to find a way to “deal” with them effectively.

We’re not really doing anything with them [the essential skills] because our systems [are] not really geared up for them. Our reports aren’t and neither are our assessment books.

All people interviewed expressed a need to cater for the essential skills more effectively than they were currently doing and acknowledged this as an area needing attention.

Assessment was ongoing with a variety of methods being used formatively and summatively. The teacher used a “tick,” “cross,” “circle” system in her assessment book which she marked against specific achievement objectives and/or learning outcomes. She stated that she used the information gathered for report-writing purposes primarily. The student sample book was also mentioned as being used for reporting to parents. The teacher noted though that parent support for the books had seemed to wane a bit this year:

They are signing them but not writing comments like they used to.
She wondered whether it was a time issue or the fact that the parents had “got used to the system.”

The lesson that stood out for this teacher as being most successful was one that she explained “evolved” as the unit went on. The highlight of the unit happened almost “accidentally” when she decided to offer the children a hands-on challenge during a lesson to keep them motivated. She stated that the result was exciting as she was able to observe “which of my children were willing to go outside the square and try something different.” She commented that the opportunity to make their own choices coupled with an element of competition which these children enjoyed seemed to be a successful combination. However, it appeared that this might not be a regular occurrence in the programme.

4.0 Discussion of findings

The principal reflected on the implementation of the curriculum into the school and classrooms this way:

There was a frantic period a few years back, where people were probably flying by the seat of their pants a lot of the time. I think we’ve passed through that now and we are much more comfortable with the curricula and the expectations. We’ve slowed the process down a bit and now that we are on a second time around looking at the numeracy and literacy documents, it makes more sense, you can begin to make it your own more.

The small size of the school meant that sharing school-wide was part of the daily culture. Each of the four teachers needed to have responsibility for several curriculum aspects and students were also able to take on responsibilities for leadership.

The principal and deputy principal had developed structured systems for planning, assessment and monitoring. They believed this freed up teachers to teach and kept meetings to a minimum. ICT, Māori, literacy and numeracy, as well as participation in the national exemplar trialling were foci in this school but not to the exclusion of other areas.

5.0 Summary

- It would appear that through ongoing school review the systems for implementation of the curriculum were changing and evolving, particularly in such areas as planning and assessment.
- Organisation and management of writing and reviewing curriculum policies appeared well grounded in practice.
- The National Administration Guidelines were linked to the school policies and planning.
- Literacy and numeracy were considered to be of high priority in the school.
- The effective use and assessment of the essential skills into classroom planning and teaching, as well as exploring ways to integrate the curriculum were acknowledged as areas the school wanted to address in the future.
- Monitoring and accountability appeared to be a focus in many of the newer practices being implemented within the school.
• There was evidence that standardisation of planning and assessment procedures was seen as a way of ensuring coverage of the curriculum and assessment of student achievement.

• The size of the school was acknowledged as a plus for such things as ease of dissemination of information and decision-making but less desirable in areas such as sharing of ideas and expertise, availability of resources and professional development opportunities.

• Collaboration on curriculum planning did not appear to happen often due to the small number of teachers, each with their own Year levels. This was seen by one teacher as a disadvantage and added to the workload.

• The teachers interviewed appeared comfortable with implementing the school systems relating to curriculum into their classroom programmes even though it appeared that a number had been developed by the management team initially.

• The student sample book system was considered by one teacher as a lot of work and possibly needing to be reviewed as to its effectiveness.

• There did not appear to be a clear link in what the teacher stated as her goal in the observed mathematics lesson and what actually occurred for the students. In discussion with the teacher, whole-class teaching appeared to be the preferred method of implementing the curriculum, with other methods being used when she felt it was appropriate.

**FP7: A rural full primary school**

1.0 Description

This school is full primary (Years 1-8) situated in a town in a rural area near a large city. It has a roll of 173 and a full-time teaching staff of seven. Its ethnic composition is Māori 13%; Pakeha 86%; and Other 1%. The school’s gender composition was 53% boys to 47% girls and had a decile rating of nine. Classes are composite groups, usually comprising pupils from two consecutive Year levels. The teachers are experienced; the least experienced having taught for eight years.

Following appointment in 2000, the principal requested a review of the school by the Education Review Office which was duly conducted later that same year. The Accountability Review Report stated under the heading, Management and Delivery of the Curriculum, “Programmes are based on the essential learning areas of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*,” and, “There is also evidence in planning documents of inclusion of essential skills.”

The report went on to say, however, that while teaching and learning programmes in most areas were based on national curriculum statements, teachers had had little recent professional development associated with implementation of these statements and thus, had not always kept up-to-date with changing perspectives. Much of the school documentation that guided teacher planning was also outdated and not regarded as important by teachers. Closer attention to the balance of strand coverage in all learning areas was needed.
In summary, the report stated, “An immediate challenge for the staff is to work as a team to establish and implement effective school-wide systems for curriculum development. The updating and development of documentation to guide teachers’ planning and programme delivery should be a priority focus area.”

It was also noted in the ERO report that the school charter needed to be simplified, so that it became the foundation document on which all planning and direction rested. The ERO report also noted that the school did not have a strategic plan or annual development plan.

2.0 School systems
2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The principal, staff, Board of Trustees, and the wider school community had done much to meet the identified requirements of the National Administration Guidelines. However, prior to embarking on the formulation of any of the required documentation, the principal checked if all teachers possessed a full set of national curriculum documents in the belief that to implement the national curriculum that teachers must have access to it.

This check revealed that few of the teaching staff actually possessed a full set of curriculum documents. Despite personal copies of each being issued to teachers following publication, it remained unclear to some as to who actually owned them. Documents were often left behind and lost when teachers moved classroom or school. Some teachers did not see the importance of the documents to their programme and the need for a personal full set. Of the seven documents each of the seven teaching staff should have possessed, a total of 15 out of 49 were found to be missing. Three hundred dollars was spent with Learning Media to replace the almost 31% lost and provide a full set for all. In addition, a full reference set was kept in the school administration area.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

The principal further believed continuity of face-to-face, teacher-pupil contact time was of paramount importance. Every attempt was made to keep interruptions to a minimum. Where possible, teacher professional development was undertaken in out of class hours and the school utilised all 10 available teacher call-back days per annum to minimise teacher time out of classrooms.

2.3 Documents: School plans

To translate the national curriculum documents into classroom practice, the school had developed a comprehensive set of supporting documents and procedures. The school’s vision statement was revised following combined community, Board of Trustees, and staff consultation meetings and now read:

Children’s learning will be at the centre of all we [the school] do. We seek to reflect our best knowledge and practice about learning processes through environments, which are co-operative, interactive and responsive to the needs of diverse learners. We will pursue school-wide learning philosophies, developing approaches and strategies that are progressive in delivery and constructive by intent. Our school will be a dynamic structure, strong in relationships, equipping learners with skills, values and attitudes that empower. We see our school as a community. We seek to develop a shared culture. We will foster a climate of trust and risk-taking, affirming and supporting individual growth and celebrating success. Our school will have academic strengths in all areas of learning with a clear focus on literacy and numeracy at all levels.
A strategic plan then set out the steps to be taken to make this vision a reality. This strategic plan was central to, and played a pivotal role in, the school’s plan for curriculum coverage. Linked directly to the need to establish and implement effective systems for curriculum development, and update and develop documentation to guide teachers’ planning and programme delivery as identified by ERO, the strategic plan contained the statement, “Teaching staff will have clear and meaningful planning procedures and structures in place to deliver a quality education that is curriculum-based and meets the needs of all students.”

In an effort to provide those clear and meaningful planning procedures and structures, a comprehensive range of supporting documents and procedures had also been formulated.

The implementation plan set out the structure, or basic elements, of what a course of study in a particular learning area should involve. Strand coverage was detailed, as were specific school events and requirements for assessment, for example, The English implementation plan stated, “A planned approach is required to cover all three strands in each year.” English assessment tools such as reading running records, PATs and TORCH (Test of Reading Comprehension) were listed. At least two objectives per unit, from four units per year were to be assessed.

A procedure statement, or policy, for each learning area set out the rationale for, purposes of, and a set of guidelines for the teaching of that particular learning area, for example, “The school programme will be based on the English in the New Zealand Curriculum, 1994 and linked where applicable to other curriculum areas. [It will] Provide and timetable regular opportunities for engagement in and enjoyment of English in all its varieties. [And] Facilitate understanding, response to, and use of oral, written and visual language.”

A chart showed the level of each strand for each learning area and detailed the achievement objectives, expected learning outcomes and assessment standards for pupils. The achievement objectives were direct from the curriculum document, the teachers having formulated many of the expected learning outcomes specifically for the pupils at this school. The assessment standards were from Multi Serve’s 4D Achieve programme. The charts indicated that level 1 achievement objectives would be covered by: Years 0, 1-2; level 2 objectives by Years 3-4; level 3 by Years 5-6; and level 4 by Years 7-8. While there was no evidence of greater multi-levelling of children’s learning in either the achievement objectives or expected learning outcomes sections, the assessment standards section indicated what children would be doing at the end of each year.

A list of resources detailed what the school had available to support teaching and learning in each curriculum area, and where the particular items were stored.

Standardised school templates for long-term and unit planning had been developed.

The long-term plans set out a list of topics, or contexts for learning, for each essential learning area and a timetable of when they would be taught during the term. Hyper-links to the teacher’s corresponding unit plans were encouraged, and would become mandatory in the immediate future.
There were tracking sheets for teachers to monitor coverage of the achievement objectives and balance in their planning. At the time of interview, these were pages copied from a commercially available teacher planning aid book which listed strands and achievement objectives. As objectives were covered in units of work, they were highlighted to provide an overview of coverage at a glance. The sheets were handed from one teacher to the next each year as children progressed through the school so repetition could be avoided. A school replacement was currently under development that would include a list of units taught, contexts and settings. Eventually the tracking sheets would also be linked to the school’s student achievement monitoring system, currently under development. This would then allow individual pupil profiles to be kept that showed students exposure to, and attainment of, the learning objectives in all curriculum areas.

The above-listed sets were kept in both colour-coded (to the cover of the corresponding curriculum document) folders, and on-line on the school’s intranet. A full set of folders was kept in each classroom and each teacher had access to a computer terminal. Hyper-links existed between many parts of the above-detailed documents and teachers were able to access the school intranet from home. The documents as a set constituted a school system for curriculum implementation.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

Motivated by the ERO report, and under the leadership of the principal, senior management team and designated curriculum co-ordinators, the above system had been developed by teaching staff over the past two years. It was an attempt to interpret the curriculum documents; to set out clearly for all involved in curriculum implementation what was required of them and to achieve this by means of a cohesive and consistent school-wide approach. Curriculum areas were tackled and the process of supporting document formulation completed one at a time. The format had been developed and modified as each curriculum area had been undertaken. The associate principal explained:

[A former teacher] and [named teacher] went to all the [Ministry of Education] Health and PE courses to start with the new document. Since they had gone to quite a number of in-service courses they started with this course to develop implementation plans in health and PE. The principal took over when [former teacher] left and developed one for health and PE and we decided to go through the series. [Named teacher] then went on to science and she had this really neat format for the actual implementation of the curriculum [so] that we used her base. That’s the second page that says [that] so many units will be taught each year, the little flow diagram, and so we used that as a base for all our curriculum areas. Teachers responsible for their curriculum areas went away and worked on it and then two were presented each term for staff to “pick it to pieces,” and say, “We’ll try this or try that,” and go back and then bring it to the staff again.

Every attempt had been made to standardise the format of the system and supporting documentation for each curriculum area.

Example: Teacher 1

We have an implementation plan in every curriculum area. We’re at the stage where we’ve got most areas covered. We’ve been going through them, last year and this year. They are set out in the same format. It started when I did the
science. I did the format like that and we decided the next one that we’d do, we followed the same format. It just happened. It wasn’t a set format but now we like it like that. It says exactly what is required for this based on the curriculum.

Outside agencies, especially local school advisers, assisted the process through up-skilling curriculum co-ordinators in their particular learning area. This process (by advisory staff) of familiarising the curriculum co-ordinators with the format and content of their respective curriculum document was seen as a key part of the process. In turn, this allowed them to do the same with other staff. One teacher explained:

To get a condensed version of the curriculum for people to realise exactly what’s going on in the new curriculum we get the advisers in. We do a workshop with the advisers with one focal point... [We then have] a meeting concentrating on revising, answering questions, going through it... We did a staff meeting on it and my colleague took the staff through the “nitty gritty” of the curriculum.

Another teacher said:

I was on the leadership course for the Health and PE curriculum two years ago now and with another teacher, led the staff in some of the development. We took staff meetings and we also had access to the facilitator from the [College of Education at the nearby university] who was taking the course. She came in and took some of the meetings with the staff as well.

Staff professional development was ongoing, determined by both the school’s strategic plan and the staff annual appraisal process.

This system of interrelated documents and procedures was said to provide a clear direction to teaching staff as to what they were required to teach. It was also seen as an effective way of ensuring curriculum coverage.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

A number of checks, both formal and informal, were made by senior management to see if teachers were doing what they said they would do in their plans. Long-term plans were e-mailed to the principal for approval and signing by the end of the first week of each term. The principal explained:

I will put on it that I’ve seen it and approved it so the teacher knows that I’ve read their long-term plan. There’s some accountability straight away. They know they’re not just producing it for the sake of producing it; they are actually producing it because the management of the school want to know what’s going on.

This was then followed up in a more informal manner by the principal through casual, but regular, visits to classrooms. He continued:

I visit the classrooms on a fairly, informal, regular basis, not going there actually looking for stuff, but just going there to get a feel. But I am also aware, because I have read the long-term plan, and if I’ve read the long-term plan and I refer to it before I go into a room, I know what I am looking for in that particular week. So if I go and visit this room in week two and I go and look at their timetable and they’re teaching number [X], I expect to see that happening. I wouldn’t expect to see them teaching geometry. I trust my
teachers to do their job. I’d rather it be an informal visit. We’ve put a structure in where [associate principals] go in once a term and do a formal accountability of what’s being done.

The associate principal added, “[principal] comes in and he’ll say, ‘What are you guys doing?’ Or, ‘What’s the purpose of this?’”

The relatively small size of this school made such an approach practical.

Once a term, associate principals formally checked the unit plans of teachers at the school. Teachers were observed on a formal basis once per year as part of the staff appraisal process.

Example

Two classrooms were visited, and the teachers interviewed to ascertain how school policies and procedures translated into teacher practice.

In the first teacher’s classroom, a lesson relating to Anzac Day was observed. Twenty-eight Year 4 and Year 5 pupils were seated on a mat with the teacher sitting in front on a low chair with a small whiteboard at one side. Most of the girls were towards the front, most of the boys towards the back. The teacher began by clearly stating what she wanted to do with a question to the class about what they had done that morning with a relief teacher while she had been out of the room. Three or four children quickly responded, telling how they had talked and then written about the poem the teacher had read to them before she left. The particularly graphic poem, Dulce et Decorum Est by Wilfred Owen, had obviously caught the children’s attention and there was a general buzz and willingness to talk about it some more. One boy related a story he had read about a donkey that was used to retrieve wounded soldiers from the battlefield. The term, “No-man’s land” came up and the teacher asked if people knew what that meant. No one was sure so the teacher restated it as a direct question. “What was no-man’s land?” One reply was from a girl who stated, “It is a piece of land where there is no men.” The child was praised for her analytical thinking and then the teacher went on to draw an analogy between trench warfare and a game of rugby. The outline of a rugby field was drawn on the board, the opposing sides likened to the children’s favourite two Super 12 teams, the object being to win territory and the field markings described as the trenches. An attack, and then counter attack, was described and the area in the middle shown to not be a very nice place to be if you were lying injured. Meaning was quickly and clearly given to the term and understanding gained through the use of the analogy with something important in both the school culture and children’s direct experience. When the children were directed to discuss the idea with partners at least one, “I remember one time when I was playing rugby and I got tackled and was lying in no-man’s land…” story was overheard. After some further discussion, several children volunteered to point out work they had completed in the morning and displayed on the class wall.

Other work on this classroom wall included dinosaur shapes cut out and painted by the children, with written language describing each particular type of dinosaur glued on. Poems about pirates and menus for pirate food written by the children were in another place. A “maths corner” had teacher examples of the everyday use of the word fractions, such as “at a fraction of the price,” and “I’ve fractured my arm,” and children’s cut-out shapes of different fractional amounts. Ways to figure area were shown with a simple,
teacher-drawn, squared diagram. The daily timetable was written on the main whiteboard, as was an example of how to set out a formal letter.

The teacher kept a detailed book of assessment records. Spelling and mathematics test marks, Running Record summaries, anecdotal notes on children’s work on units covered, and columns of ticks indicating attainment or otherwise of listed objectives were all kept.

When asked how her plans linked to the national curriculum documents and school policies the teacher replied:

> Well, they link to the national curriculum documents in that I use the achievement objectives that are clearly set out. I use the essential skills that [are] in the National Curriculum Framework document and I also find that lots of the sample learning contexts that are in the curriculum documents are really good, and really useful. There’s lots of extra stuff the Ministry puts out that’s also extremely useful. In terms of how it relates to our school policies, which actually mostly are now procedures as opposed to policies, they are also based, they’re written based around the curriculum frameworks as well. They’re written to tie in so there’s no conflict there.

The teachers freely acknowledged making use of the curriculum documents when planning. In response to a question about how she went about unit planning she stated, “I decide what context I want to use and then I go and find achievement objectives to match…achievement objectives, learning objectives…directly in the documents.”

Teachers at this school were also able to clearly state a purpose for their planning. When asked what purpose she saw her plans serving, this teacher stated:

> The purpose for me of a written plan is so I remember what I wanted to do. How I, so I remember how I wanted to do it. It’s just putting down on paper in an organised way what you’ve got in your head. There is a requirement that you have it [to] show that you did it.

She saw her planning in the first instance as informing her teaching, but also for meeting school requirements.

The term, “integrated unit” was one used often by staff at this school when describing planning. The associate principal explained such a unit as being:

> An integrated unit is where you’ve got your topic, or your context, but you have planned for and you have included achievement objectives for more than one curriculum area. And you have assessment tasks to assess those. It must have achievement objectives from more than one [curriculum area].

This teacher also indicated a preference for integrated units and described one as:

> To me, “integrated learning” means writing a unit based on a basic learning context which then has several different, or two or three different areas of the curriculum fitted in to that context so that, the name of the unit is like an umbrella, perhaps, and the other things are sheltering under it.

In another teacher’s classroom, completed work relating to studies undertaken over the course of the year to date, both in children’s books and on display on the classroom walls, was looked at. In one corner of this classroom, a “beach trip” display had been set up.
Children had painted over paper-mache to create a rock pool diorama and then glued items of their own written work about the trip and what they had seen there to appropriate parts of the model. Lists of words generated by pupils in response to teacher questions such as, “What did we see?” and “What did we do?” had been prepared to assist children’s writing and also formed part of the display. In another part of the room, children’s dye over crayon pictures of caterpillars, cocoons and butterflies illustrated a Making Sense of the Living World unit covered. Gum Emperor caterpillars had been kept in the classroom during the summer and children had observed them change into cocoons. Stemming from a recently completed unit on dinosaurs, children’s writing was illustrated hanging from wires and stapled to the walls. One particularly graphic example read, “Although Diplodocus was one of the largest dinosaurs, its head was tiny, not much bigger than a horse’s head today.”

Teacher assessment and self-assessment by students of their own work was evident. This teacher kept an electronic mark book. Information recorded included reading level attainment, Reading Running Record summaries, spelling levels, mathematics post-test marks, grids with “yes,” “no,” or various ticks or other symbols indicated degrees of attainment of listed achievement objectives, and anecdotal comments on children’s progress and achievement. An example of child self-assessment was a strip of paper with a simple grid, glued into children’s handwriting books at the end of each lesson, with faces drawn to indicate the pupil’s feelings about their work.

A planning folder contained the following, all based on school models:

- A unit planning guideline;
- Long-term plans;
- Various “integrated” units of work;
- Teacher unit evaluation sheets;
- Pupil unit assessment sheets;
- Tracking sheets for both achievement objectives and essential skills covered in the year to date.

Each of the integrated units in the planning folder included the following:

(i) A context, for example, dinosaurs or Anzac Day;
(ii) The essential learning areas that work would be completed in. Strands were indicated and achievement objectives to be covered listed;
(iii) Essential skills to be developed;
(iv) Specific learning outcomes for each achievement objective;
(v) A list of learning activities;
(vi) A list of resources, including where some were located, and occasionally a timetable for their use; and
(vii) Assessment tasks for several different learning areas.

The teacher described her planning process: “I will decide what I will have in that unit, I get the documents out, decide how I have to cover each of the things in that unit then write it up.” When asked what she meant by “the documents” she indicated both the national curriculum documents and the school’s own documents.
She also saw her planning in the first instance as informing teaching:

I know what I’m teaching, I know what I have to cover, because it’s very easy, especially with little kids, to get sidetracked. I know I’ve got to cover. I know that what I’ve covered is documented so things, especially like technology where they have to cover so many areas in three years and then so many in four years, the next teacher knows what they’ve done. So things are not repeated. I suppose that’s called tracking. And that we’re covering what the document says we should be covering.

She went on to elaborate on coverage requirements.

Both these two teachers described the school system as being helpful, user-friendly and a time effective aid to planning. Key features from the teachers’ viewpoints were the support the structure provided, its ease of use, and the live links between components. As one said:

We have developed them [the school systems] over the last few years and I think that they are improving all the time, and definitely this year, I think they are just about spot on. All the things we do you can trace straight back to where they should be. I think they are pretty good.

The two teachers interviewed agreed it would be easy for a new teacher coming into the school to pick up and use the system and be confident of meeting school requirements for planning and curriculum coverage.

5.0 Discussion of findings

This school had translated the intended curriculum, The New Zealand Curriculum Framework and supporting documents, to the operational one, through a hierarchical and detailed system of documentation. The various levels of this documentary system serve distinct and different purposes. At the top level the school charter, mission statement and vision statement made clear a purpose for curriculum implementation. At the next level, a strategic plan and annual development plan set out a timeline for those purposes to be achieved. Specific guidelines for teachers to follow were set out in implementation plans and procedure statements. The content of the national curriculum statements was laid out for teachers on detailed learning area, strand and level specific charts with suggested learning outcomes and achievement standards. A format for long-term and unit planning was provided, as was a way of tracking learning objective coverage and evaluating children’s work. A well developed school intranet system allowed staff electronic access to the system from terminals around the school and their own, home computers.

Teachers at this school displayed a preference for what they called “integrated units.” This was an approach whereby their planning incorporated achievement objectives for a number of different learning areas in relation to a particular theme, or focus, for study.

The system appeared clear, logical and cohesive. It was both understood by, and being used by staff for planning. It provided documentary evidence of curriculum interpretation and coverage. The school had identified assessment of student achievement in relation to planned achievement objectives, and electronic storage of data collected as their next area for development.
5.0 Summary

- School planning thoroughly linked to school plans for curriculum implementation.
- Specific guidelines about implementing the curriculum and assessment were set out for teachers to follow.
- Formats provided for tracking curriculum coverage and assessment, much of it electronic.
- School intranet was used by staff from both school and home computers.
- Integrated units combined achievement objectives from several curriculum areas under topics or themes.

FP8: An urban full primary school

1.0 Description

This school is a medium-sized, decile 2, full primary school (Years 1-8) in a regional city. A wide range of students attended the school, most coming from low socio-economic groups from within the local community. The student population consisted of 220 students and was made up of 22% Pakeha; 61% Māori; and 17% other students. There were nine classrooms operating and a multi-level Rumaki class for total immersion Māori students. The school was well maintained and had undertaken some refurbishment over recent years including the staffroom, principal’s office and a new meeting room. A new principal and deputy principal had been appointed recently but staff were generally stable.

The school motto focussed on respect, learning and growth, the staff vision being to provide a quality education environment in which all children had the opportunity to learn. Literacy and numeracy were the main curriculum foci with special attention paid to students’ oral language. Competence in oral language was believed to be the foundation for the development of all other curricula but special attention was also paid to students’ health and knowing how to take care of their bodies. Teachers believed this ultimately impacted on students’ ability to perform well during school hours. A concern signalled in a recent ERO report was how to effectively communicate with Māori parents and encourage a greater participation in the school and their children’s learning. Teachers at this school were encouraged to be innovative and regularly sought out and trialled new systems and programmes to better meet the needs of their students and the community. An example of this was the new student achievement book, which replaced the previous annual report to parents. It provided a more detailed account of student learning and went some way to address the problem referred to above.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The management team of this school consisted of a principal, deputy principal, assistant principal and a senior teacher. The school was organised into three syndicates, junior, middle and senior, each being led by one of the senior management team. Each group was made up of teachers from two to three Year groups. These groups met once a week to disseminate general class-related information, to plan together, and to share ideas and provide collegial support. Curriculum responsibilities were shared among the senior management team and other staff members, depending on their expertise and interest.
These staff members were responsible for passing on information to the whole staff relating to their curriculum area, and for ordering, organising and storing resources. In some cases, they would provide specific support to other staff members, or carry out a specific duty, for example, the senior teacher in charge of mathematics also co-ordinated the collation of school-wide assessment data. It was reported that staff worked comfortably in teams, and that a helpful, collaborative working environment existed within the school.

The principal saw her role as cultivating the philosophy that underpinned curriculum delivery, and driving the organisation and delivery of class programmes to reflect this. She also viewed her role as identifying staff strengths and weaknesses and filling the gaps through professional development and in-school support.

### 2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

Opportunities for professional development were generally available to all members of staff and linked with individual needs and staff appraisal goals. New staff, for example, always attended the “Cool Schools” programme that focused on behaviour management strategies, and in particular, peer mediation skills. Some of the work was carried out during the term, but staff also had a “call back” day most holidays to attend workshops. Professional development linked strongly to the strategic goals identified for the school, which were reported each year to the Ministry of Education. For example, during 2003 the development focus was on ICT and curriculum integration. Staff were involved in the Ministry of Education ICT contract that was directed by a university education provider. Because of its focus on learning rather than the expected focus on ICT, this had linked well with the focus on curriculum integration. Staff had also been able to visit other schools outside of the provincial area to see the different approaches that had been developed. Last year, the whole staff worked with external facilitators on implementing the new arts curriculum, and during 2003 this was being monitored and implemented into classroom programmes. Literacy, which was the focus of a major review two years previously, was targeted again for a general review in 2003. Each identified area became part of a three-year cycle, that is, development, implementation and review.

### 2.3 Documents: School plans

Since the appointment of the new principal in early 2003, some changes had been made to the structure and organisation of the school-wide plans. To reduce repetition, an overarching school curriculum policy had been developed along with a school curriculum plan. It detailed the delivery, content, assessment, reporting and self-review of each curriculum document. This was intended to provide a greater level of detail and guidance for teachers. It also took into consideration the more recent philosophical perspectives contained within an inquiry learning model and integrated curriculum model that were being implemented in the school.

As a whole staff, a “rich context” was selected for the year, for example, “journeys or pathways.” This was teased out further with topic ideas for each term, but most importantly, with ideas to ensure curriculum coverage. Layered on top of this were other aspects of learning, for example, health, thinking skills, multiple intelligences and keeping ourselves safe. There was an expectation that clear links would be made to achievement objectives, levels and learning outcomes at the unit planning stage. In addition to this, a principal’s theme was also selected and in 2003 it was “switch on your brain.” This
became the theme for behaviour management in the school. A popular catch phrase emanating from this was, “Walk away from trouble.”

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

The principal set an annual working budget for classroom resources and syndicate leaders, each having budgetary allocations that could be used as required by staff. This was a change from the organisation prior to implementing the integrated curriculum model in which budgets were allocated according to curriculum teams. All staff members could source new items or make requests. Suggestions generally came as a result of book displays by publishing companies, workshops, identified problem areas, or when topping up lost or damaged equipment. The school appeared to be well stocked with resources across the curriculum and teachers indicated that they were able to access most items they required. The school strategic plan and other areas of particular focus tended to influence allocation of funds. A flexible approach was used and special allocations would be made from year to year, for example, funds were directed into funding a new Japanese language programme, which was trialled.

2.5 Assessment policy

Students:
The school curriculum plan gave clear procedures to teachers for the collection, analysis and distribution of student work. An assessment schedule had been developed which set out a timeframe for data collection and also identified those that needed to be included in the individual student achievement books. The “achievement book” was a newly developed method of reporting to parents and contained individual student goals and a selection of pre-arranged, formally annotated work samples, that is, the curriculum, achievement objective, learning outcome, level and assessment accompanying each sample.

A range of other assessment procedures was carried out in order to check progress and to identify students who needed extra support, for example, the School Entry Assessment tests, Record of Oral Language, letter identification, high frequency words, a story retell and an Early Numeracy test. In addition, the six-year net, regular running records, tests of high frequency words, Numeracy Project Assessment (NUMPA) tests and others were carried with older students. As mentioned previously, the teacher in charge of mathematics collated information for school-wide monitoring. The school was developing a range of benchmarks for some curriculum areas. These were collated and reproduced into benchmark kits, which provided teachers with examples of student work at the levels identified by various curriculum documents. Some of the information gathered by classroom teachers was summarised onto class assessment sheets, and given to a school assessment committee for review each fortnight. In addition, staff collected summative assessment data for each major unit that was taught and made use of their own systems and methods for collating and analysing information.

Staff:
Staff were fully supported in their work at this school and systems were in place to ensure that the expectations of both the community and the school were achieved. Year 1 and Year 2 teachers had the ongoing support of tutor teachers, and other staff worked collegially in syndicates, planning, sharing, and assisting each other to prepare good quality
programmes for their students. Personal appraisal systems were not referred to during interviews, but the 2002 ERO report recommended that a more in-depth support staff appraisal system be implemented and which was linked to professional development and ongoing improvement. A detailed whole-staff development plan was documented and listed seven goals for the year along with how it would be carried out and the personnel involved in workshops. For example, Te Reo Māori would be taught by two staff members for 15 minutes at alternate syndicate meetings.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

As mentioned previously, this school had an overall curriculum delivery plan or policy that was supported by individual curriculum plans. These plans provided guidance for assessment, special needs, homework, and included curriculum achievement targets developed by the principal and staff. A context was selected for the year at a staff meeting, for example, this year it was “journeys or pathways.” This was teased out further in syndicate meetings with ideas for each term. There was an expectation that clear links were made to achievement objectives, levels and learning outcomes at the unit planning stage.

*Example: Mathematics throughout the school*

A senior teacher was responsible for overseeing mathematics in the school. In 1995, she worked as a facilitator for a Ministry of Education mathematics contract, and this led to her current in-school role as curriculum leader. She particularly enjoyed teaching mathematics and over the years had built up considerable experience in the area. She thought students at this school were very needy, most having few life experiences and difficulty with tasks requiring logic. She thought that it was very important for the school mathematics programme to reflect the needs of these students.

In 1999, the school participated in a trial for the first Ministry of Education mathematics project. Since then, staff members have been involved in the “Count Me In Too” projects, the Early Numeracy Project and the Advanced Numeracy Project, and at the time of interview had implemented most features of these into the school programme. Staff had received good support from the local school advisory service (mathematics adviser) to implement the programmes, and had visited other schools running the same programme and observed lessons. Funding required for this and other curriculum areas was accessed from the syndicate budget and was needs-based. Teachers were encouraged to identify and order resources that they knew would be needed for the following year.

At a staff meeting towards the end of the year, staff decided how coverage would be achieved to address both the needs of the mathematics curriculum and the Numeracy Project Assessment (NUMPA) tasks. The curriculum leader provided support and guidance in delivering the school plan, working with the whole staff, syndicate or individual teachers. She was responsible for developing the curriculum plan for mathematics and also monitoring, recording and analysing school-wide data. She was also responsible for working with staff to develop teaching targets for each level.

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

The school was organised into three syndicates, junior, middle and senior, which met once a week. These groups worked together to expand their long-term plans and documented
these in the form of term overviews. They selected specific topics and ensured good coverage of the curriculum areas, the strands and the achievement objectives within each of these. Unit planning was generally done together so that students in each syndicate were receiving the same cross-section of teaching and learning opportunities. Meetings were also a forum for sharing ideas, providing support for teachers who required help, and the usual housekeeping to keep classes and programmes running smoothly. There was an expectation that all planning would be reflected school policies and the requirements of the various curriculum documents. This was checked fortnightly by the syndicate leaders and annually by the principal.

Ensuring staff had a good understanding of new initiatives in the school was another responsibility of the syndicate leaders. Staff meeting discussions or professional development was often followed up at syndicate meetings where issues could be clarified and further support put in place if required. Giving staff ownership of new developments within the school was seen as being very important.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

Teachers carried out weekly planning and lesson plans independently. Units of work developed by the syndicate might be delivered by the classroom teacher according to the interests, strengths and the needs of the students. In 2002, separate weekly planning booklets for mathematics, reading and writing were developed which included relevant school curriculum checklists to further guide teachers’ planning. This idea was picked up by many of the other teachers and was now used across the school. Other teachers preferred to use a clear file or a conventional teacher planning book. The teacher interviewed saw weekly planning as being very important. She felt that it allowed teachers to be well organised and to focus their assessment on the planned learning outcomes. It also helped them plan for groups and individual students who required alternative work. She believed that literacy and numeracy should receive more emphasis than other curriculum areas, and she felt strongly that the essential skills, which underpinned all student learning, should be organising structure for planning rather than the curricula. In this school, as mentioned previously, health was a huge issue and was seen to be a fundamental barrier to effective student progress. Major work in ensuring students and parents appreciated the importance of adequate sleep, cleanliness and general care of the body was urgently needed.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This school had a high proportion of Māori students and had created a Te Reo Māori immersion classroom (across years). The school was organised into three teacher syndicates (one at each level). The evidence was that these groups worked positively. Recently, a new whole-school curriculum plan was formulated to overcome some repetition. Staff had visited other schools for ideas. There was a clear policy on student assessment.

From the school plan, syndicates drew up plans and the whole staff followed an annual theme. Since 2002, there were weekly planning booklets for mathematics, reading and writing to guide teachers. Teachers at this school put in a great deal of effort to provide relevant learning experiences for students. While optimistic, these teachers faced enormous challenges in a low decile school where many factors impacted upon student learning (such as health, and issues with oral language).
From early 2003, the school had adopted an inquiry learning and integrated curriculum model for planning, teaching and assessment. A rich context was selected for a year to act as an organising topic for ensuring curriculum coverage. Budgeting had been directed through syndicate leaders to classrooms to support this integrated curriculum rather than funding curriculum areas separately.

The assessment systems were designed to collect evidence for reporting to parents, check progress and identify students needing extra support. Most of these systems appeared to have a summative focus. There were also school-wide policies for homework and specifying achievement targets. Mathematics, in particular, featured strong planning, assessment and achievement monitoring.

5.0 Summary

- Mathematics was a particular target area at this school.
- Syndicate structure provided an organisational framework for this school.
- Specific topics were used as contexts for integrating curriculum teaching and learning.
- Budgeting supported this integrated approach.
- Planning, assessment and monitoring followed school-wide formats related to a curriculum coverage checklist.
- Syndicate leaders checked planning weekly and the principal checked it annually.
- Professional development was seen as important and staff were all undertaking a Te Reo Māori course together each week.

II: An urban intermediate school

1.0 Description

This decile 3 intermediate had 544 students including seven foreign fee-paying students. According to ERO figures (2000) 34% of the school’s students were Māori; 53% Pakeha; 2% Asian; 2% Somali; and 9% Other. Boys made up 46% and girls 54% of the student population. The grounds were well-kept and there was ongoing development of the physical environment and facilities.

Students in the school were drawn from a huge range of backgrounds and deciles (range 1-10) but the 20% student turnover per year was not viewed as high for schools in this area. The secondary schools these students go on to reportedly considered students from this school to have good ICT skills. Staff believed it was important for students to leave this school with high self-esteem, knowing who they were and where they came from. The academic content was important but came second. Basic skills were seen as important, as was problem-solving and knowing how and where to find information.
2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

There were 29 staff at this school. Each class was a composite class of Year 7-8 students who had the same main classroom teacher for two years. Five classes were grouped into each syndicate. Specialist teachers were employed for fabric, electronics, art, food and music. The principal had the reputation for being forthright and achieving results. There were two deputy principals (DP), one for curriculum and one for student management. Underneath these were the curriculum leaders and curriculum committees, and the syndicate leaders and syndicates. There was a curriculum leader for each of the seven learning areas and ICT. The leaders of these committees had been responsible for keeping staff informed, organising resources, reviewing progress across the school and reporting back to senior management. Since a new DP had assumed responsibility for curriculum, there appeared some uncertainty as to where the lines of responsibility were now drawn. Staff meetings were held every second week on Mondays, paying attention to staff workload and stress. On Tuesdays, there were syndicate meetings called if they were needed, and the curriculum committee met on Wednesdays as directed by the curriculum leader.

Staff had formal interviews with the principal twice a term. The principal also visited classrooms on a formal and regular basis and wrote a written letter of thanks noting his findings to each teacher afterwards. These visits had a clear structure and indicated what the principal was looking for. He paid particular attention to student workbooks, asking the students if they were clear about what they were expected to be doing regarding behaviour, learning and presentation.

2.3 Documents: School plans

The strategic plan for this school was only one-page long with six or seven goals under each of the following headings: student learning and achievement; developing a quality learning community; and school organisation and structure.

There was a curriculum policy for each area which contained planning expectations and requirements for the teaching of that subject, statements and an action plan. There were many templates. The school’s curriculum policies were in need of review; due to staffing circumstances the usual cycle of review had been interrupted and at the time of interview had not yet been recommenced. The DP curriculum saw a review of the paperwork as being overdue, particularly in the areas of mathematics and English, as the school has been involved in the numeracy and literacy projects.

Staff were required to complete class descriptions and write how they taught each subject area. The purpose of these tasks was to develop self-awareness. Although the principal described a very structured environment and a particular way they did things at this school, he was also keen for teachers to be able to express their individuality, flare and style, “I want personalities,” he said. The principal determined which students would go into which classes by what he knew about the teacher and what he learned about the students from the child and the parents.
2.5 Assessment policy and practice

Classroom teachers used a “tick” report for term one, then there was a mid-year report in term two, and an end-of-year report in term four. This school was looking towards an electronic reporting system in the near future so the focus was on getting that in place for 2004. Apparently there were lots of issues over this to settle; up until the time of interview, the school had been changing its report formats “all the time.”

Personal development was given the same amount of emphasis in these reports as the curriculum. The current report was designed to work in conjunction with individual student profiles so that parents could review marked samples of work alongside the sketch of the overall picture provided by this report format.

The two curriculum areas reviewed at this school were mathematics and English. Currently mathematics was reported on a five-point scale from strong to weak for each of the basic fact areas, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. There was a box for a grade on attitude and effort. English was handled in the same way with reading, writing, and oral skills reported using a five-point scale from strong to weak, and there was also a grade box for an attitude and effort grade.

Assessment procedures were well documented and all teachers had an assessment folder in which to record student achievement in all areas. Student profiles contained samples of work to illustrate progress over time. Samples were marked against set criteria. Students were clearly expected to achieve as it was stated that students were expected to progress in their learning by 2.5 years over the two years that they attended this school. Students were assessed regularly to ensure adequate progress was being made as the core skills of numeracy and literacy were an identified priority. High expectation for student behaviour was paying off because students were friendly, polite and looking to help.

There was not a major focus on the essential skills in this school since they were not detailed in planning and not overtly tracked.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

When asked about the curriculum documents, the first thing that the principal wanted to get across was that, clearly, schools could not deliver all that was in the curriculum documents, so then the next step was to put all the documents into the middle of a staff meeting and ask, “What are we going to do and how are we going to do it?” He asked his staff to look, firstly, at where the students were at, based on assessment, and then determine the priorities for these students and the school.

The curriculum was described as fragmented in this school. The new DP with responsibility for curriculum believed that although the documentation was in place, individual teachers were exercising a great deal of flexibility so that what was written did not describe what was actually happening. He cited the need for longer-term overviews. He also felt that this school trained new teacher graduates who then left for overseas travel or moved on to other schools. His role was not appraisal but of supporting and guiding teachers in the interest of developing them as successful professionals. Thus, he visited classrooms regularly.
Example: Mathematics

The main focus for all teachers and students was on the Advanced Numeracy Project. A member of the school advisory service had played a key role in supporting the staff, in terms of professional development and the programme in classrooms.

This curriculum area was being reviewed by the mathematics committee, which had one representative from each syndicate meeting twice a term. This committee was reviewing the mathematics policy, completing a stocktake of book resources and making up a list of recommended purchases.

The mathematics curriculum leader felt his expertise was really in computers. As an ICT specialist, he took up responsibility for mathematics in the absence of any other more qualified staff member.

Questions were raised about the ability of the mathematics curriculum document being able to support teachers who did not already have a depth of knowledge in mathematics and a certain degree of expertise on which to base their judgements about student achievement. This leader believed that the emphasis for future improvement needed to be on each individual teacher’s own understanding and skill in mathematics. He believed the reason he had survived was because he “knows his maths.” He felt that it was the government’s responsibility to produce mathematics reference books, curriculum documents, and learning examples to support the teachers with less mathematical knowledge and skill.

He was experiencing some cross-over in his role as mathematics curriculum leader and as new DP. This teacher felt that after all his effort to attain the position of curriculum leader, he was simply monitoring equipment at the moment. However, he was continuing to organise meeting and release times for the adviser on the numeracy project “to make sure it happened.”

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

Planning at the syndicate level was overlaid by the numeracy project in 2003. Teachers saw a need for pre-written standardised units for all topics at levels 3-4 with the teachers writing their own units at level 2 based on student needs. Teachers continued to write their own learning objectives and there was no system operating to tie this across classes.

School-wide assessment took place each year for basic facts and number and the “secondary strands” were assessed school-wide over two years. Information from these assessments was collected and reported.

Each curriculum area completed an annual report that went to the principal so that he could report to the Board of Trustees. This year, the mathematics report was likely to include a summary on areas of need, success stories and information on the numeracy project.

Key support for the mathematics curriculum was believed to have been: the budget and materials provided by the numeracy project; internet resources that were sorted and shared amongst staff (The DP was given most of the credit for this); the staff meeting on mathematics held once per term; and the school’s intranet area for mathematics.
It was generally agreed that a key issue for everyone was that “there is too much information in too many different places.”

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

Example 1: Mathematics

Students lined up outside the classroom for entry. They were given instructions to go and sit on the mat before they were let in. All the students took off their shoes and went to the mat. The teacher sat on her chair at the front of the mat area and explained that today they were continuing with multiplication. The 25 students were a Year 7 and 8 composite class and they were divided into three ability groups. One group had an activity using prepared cards to practise their basic facts. Another group had a similar activity to complete in a circle. The third group was seated on the mat to work with the teacher. The students were familiar with the activities and settled well. The teacher with the group on the mat began by focusing students on how to get started with their book work. She set out her expectations for the work and for its presentation. She explained the question of the textbook they were to do, and told them how to show their working out. The teacher had a master booklet for each group made up of A3 sheets. In this book she modelled what she wanted the students to do. The session for this group was on fractions, and the teacher was teaching a definition of fractions and used questioning to talk through the questions to be completed in this lesson. The teacher recorded notes about the tricky questions in her book for the students to refer back to later and then asked if everyone understood, asking if they had any questions. Then she reminded the students in this group about how to set out their work. The group was set to work on the mat for a few minutes while the teacher circulated around the other groups and answered questions. This group remained seated on the mat while the teacher used “freeze” for the students to stop what they were doing and look for further instructions. The teacher mentioned how pleased she was with the group’s cooperation allowing her to work well with the group she had on the mat. One person from each of the maintenance groups was given the responsibility to collect the game equipment, in both cases, cards, and put them away. A new group was instructed to come to the mat with their mathematics books while the first group moved off and the other group was given instructions to select an activity from the maintenance box and record the title of the activity and the date in their mathematics books before commencing the activity.

The new group on the mat were required to hand in their mathematics books. The teacher collected her made-up A3 booklet for this group and then seated the group in a circle. She asked them to recall when they used the picture cards for last time. These cards had sets of animals on them. She asked the students to take the appropriate cards from the middle, and then asked a number of problems? She asked the students who provided answers how they had worked it out and drew attention to the fact that you could count the animals in fives or in threes. The teaching point for this group was that it did not matter if you had three groups of five, or five groups of three the answer was the same. Then she used $4 \times 7 = 28$ and found students using $14 + 14 = 28$. She went back to the first example to illustrate division. The teaching point here was that you could use multiplication to check your division. The teacher took delight in confirming that if you know your multiplication then you could do division. Students answered further questions with less and less reference to the picture cards. The task for this group was to take the questions written on the board by the teacher and record the answer and then check using multiplication to the side. The teacher wrote the first question and modelled the format for recording in her own booklet.
for this group. Five questions were written out in full on the board for the students to try for themselves.

The teacher circulated again and was available for all students with questions. “Freeze” was used again to get the class to stop work and pack up. She collected in the textbooks that one group had been using and counted them as the class made the transition to a new activity, reading.

There was a telephone in the room and it rang twice during this session with requests for particular students to go to the office. At one point, a student who had been a librarian returned and the teacher directed him to ask the members of his group to explain what he should be doing.

One student was seated to the side of the classroom and worked quietly on independent study. He had been stood down earlier in the week from the bilingual unit and had recently moved to this school. He was working steadily on independent work but was not yet inclined to join in with the class or group activities. The teacher explained that this was an improvement from the first day he was present as he had refused to come into the classroom.

The teachers’ planning for this lesson had come out of the numeracy project, and had highlighted the desired learning outcomes for this class. She used weekly mathematics planners to show what each of the three groups would do each day. Changes in her planning indicated change due to interruptions or different rates of student learning, she explained. The numeracy project used stages and levels but the teacher could not explain how these related to those same levels in the curriculum document; she suspected they did not.

Example 2: English

The curriculum leader for English had completed four years of English at university and counted this subject as a personal strength. She simply had waited her turn to be head of department (HOD) or curriculum leader. Her role was defined, as she saw it, as being in charge of making sure there were adequate programmes at the students’ levels, based on needs. She provided programme guidelines, resources, and introduced ideas to extend students in this subject. Both she and the new DP looked out for professional development courses suitable for the teachers.

She believed that oral skills were essential to prepare students for the future, the first impression they give and their confidence. She also listed reading capably high on that list and explained that the locating of student knowledge and skills gaps and the meeting of these needs was a big focus for the school. It was also important that students felt a sense of progress in all areas of the English curriculum.

The English curriculum committee met only when there was a need such as organising or marking out the library or debating competitions and the school magazine at the end of the year. The students were encouraged to take part in the school competitions and use external competitions to encourage writing for a purpose.
The HOD and the committee developed questionnaires to find out staff needs, and subsequently provided professional development to meet these needs. English was on the staff meeting agenda each term. In addition, staff could be invited to attend sessions and observe classes. This HOD considered that the staff had “open access” to her when they had questions.

School-wide assessment was undertaken every second year for the purposes of standardisation. For example, all students completed a letter with the same synopsis and time limit. These were marked and collated according to levels.

Spelling was seen as an identified weakness for teaching in the school. The HOD put out a questionnaire asking about current practice and giving staff the opportunity to ask for help, identify useful resources and barriers to success in this area. This HOD believed that spelling was also an area of weakness in the curriculum document and that achievement objectives were needed at each level for spelling.

In November each year, the HOD prepared a report for the principal to use when reporting to the Board of Trustees. Usually this curriculum area would report on activities and competitions undertaken, successes with outside competitions, extension and remedial programmes, assessment stats and weaknesses.

Two supporting resources that this school had found useful for the English curriculum programme were the NEMP documents and the companies that send catalogues and put up book displays. This school had signed up for the literacy contract in 2004.

A key barrier to curriculum development for the English curriculum leader was the strength and perseverance required to move individual teachers forward under their current workload.

The lesson

The class I observed was just the Year 8 students as the Year 7 students had gone off to music. Twelve students were present. The teacher began by explaining that they were going to have a review lesson for my benefit as things had been muddled and this was short notice. I appreciated that he had volunteered. They began by having time to remember the characteristics of recounts and reports. The students were allowed to discuss this if they wished but it was fairly quiet. Then the teacher made up two columns on the whiteboard and recorded the students’ suggestions under report or recount.

The teacher then asked for contexts and situations when writing a recount and a report. The students were asked to write their ideas down this time and as they worked, the teacher repeated the question in a number of different ways. The teacher asked individuals to read out a context and he wrote these up on the board.

Next, the teacher spread word cards on the mat with, “Where?” “When?” “How?” “Who?” and “Why?” on them. Students were asked to come forward with the cards that they considered were important for a report. Some students moved forward to arrange the cards and they decided that they all went except, “Why?” “Why,” was a maybe. For a recount, they decided all the words would be important. The teacher then posed a series of statements and students voted on whether they were “true,” or “false.”
concluded that a recount was personal or factual, that they were about the past and that you could not write a recount about an object but you could write a report about one. The teacher pointed out two charts he had put up about recounts and reports and suggested the students have a closer look when they got the chance.

The teacher explained afterwards that he had chosen this topic because he knew the students had prior knowledge and thought it would be good for the class to revise this work and that he had good charts. He explained that he often used group brainstorming and then revision for the main ideas as a lesson format. He also used overhead transparencies a lot for clarifying the teaching points.

He used the template provided on the school’s intranet to write units and asked the students to record the learning outcomes at the start of the unit. He used a checklist system for keeping track of student achievement according to the identified unit objectives.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This decile 3 intermediate school had an extremely diverse student population, in terms of ethnicity, socio-economically, and in academic achievement. The contributing schools were also diverse, including one decile 10 and two decile 1 schools.

In this large school could be seen the challenges in implementing classroom programmes that were effective and relevant for all students (given their diversity). The school organisation into syndicates helped teachers narrow their focus to a particular group of students. However, it was difficult to achieve a common, consistent approach across the school in planning and assessment. Notwithstanding these issues, the school leadership provided powerful support in creating optimum conditions for learning including a high investment in resources, staff professional development and high expectations for student behaviour.

To an extent, this school was entering a new phase of curriculum development by a new round of review of curriculum plans and policies.

5.0 Summary

- This school has a diverse student population, drawing from all socio-economic groups. It included relatively high numbers of Pakeha, Māori, Somali, and other ethnic groups.
- It has up to a 20% turnover of students annually.
- Short curriculum systems have been recently reviewed and there was an emphasis on students making two and a half years of progress in the two years they were there.
- ICT was emphasised.
- Electronic formats for planning and assessment were used in several curriculum areas.
- Student behaviour policies and practices were seen as critical for the development of self-esteem and student learning.
I2: An intermediate school in a regional town

1.0 Description

This decile 4 intermediate was situated in a medium-sized rural town in a farming district. The student population of 465 was made up of 68% European; 33% Māori; and a small number of students from other nationalities. Students were in composite classes of Years 7-8. The school structure was for the Year 7s to remain with the same teacher the following year to provide continuity and allow for consistent monitoring of their learning. There were 22 teachers, with a number of beginning and young teachers on the staff. The senior management team was comprised of the principal and three DPs who were all women. The first DP, who had a non-teaching position, was in charge of curriculum within the school and had the title of “curriculum director.” The second DP had classroom responsibilities and leadership in assessment. The third DP also had classroom responsibilities as well as leadership in performance management and professional development. The principal explained the thinking behind this structure. He said, “The power base in a school should involve as many people as possible so that there is a shared ownership of the organisation.” He stated that he felt it was important to give people opportunities to become leaders and saw his role in this as providing the time and resources; and then to “get out of their way and let them get on with the job.” The school’s latest ERO report reflected this ethos commending the principal for his “strong and inclusive leadership.” Middle management were referred to as “team leaders” whose responsibility it was to oversee the four syndicates within the school.

The latest ERO report (2000) stated that the school provided high quality learning opportunities for all students in a supportive and motivating environment. Teachers were seen to work hard, providing challenging and interesting curriculum, that met the wide range of student needs within the school.

A focus for future development mentioned by all senior management staff and mentioned as a recommendation by ERO in their last review was to continue analysing, refining and improving the collection of student achievement information in all curriculum areas so as to improve classroom practices and ultimately, student learning outcomes.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

As stated above, overall responsibility for curriculum, assessment and professional development fell to the three deputy principals within the school. The principal stated that he had deliberately organised the management structure in this way because he believed in sharing power, but also because:

\[ \text{Responsibility for things like curriculum and assessment require detailed knowledge and time. I believe an effective principal cannot and should not try to be “all things to all people” and so survival in this game is delegation. These are key roles in the school... they are the purpose of why schools are here.} \]

He stated that although he was ultimately responsible for the organisation and running of the school, his management team did the “ground work” in curriculum and assessment and
reported to him. “My job, in a nice way, is to keep the whip cracking so they keep moving forward.” When asked what he expected from the national curriculum for his school, the principal reflected, “Probably what I want is what’s not in the national curriculum. It’s more the ‘hidden curriculum’ that’s got to do with students’ self-esteem and self-belief.”

He went on to emphasise the importance of the school in providing a platform for his students to set goals for their future lives. Accordingly, the principal believed positive self-esteem and self-belief were needed before the essential learning areas could be introduced successfully. To this end, the school promoted and encouraged students to become active participants and take on leadership roles in areas of interest and strength within the classroom environment and in the many other cultural and sporting activities offered by the school. He likened students’ need for self-confidence, “to embrace and own new learning opportunities,” to that of his DPs and their need for ownership over what they were trying to achieve in their areas of responsibility. “Both the students and my DPs need to own and understand the changes they are making and what they are trying to achieve, their needs are very similar really.”

The two DPs responsible for curriculum and assessment worked closely together. They had regular weekly meetings but also found that they talked a lot incidentally. The principal added that he deliberately provided time and resources for the three DPs to get off-site to plan and discuss organisational matters as he felt this time was valuable and could not always be achieved on-site during a busy school day.

During an interview, the first and second deputy principals commented that they felt “accountable for the learning within the school.” Their major focus was currently on mathematics and literacy. They had developed and implemented a generic curriculum policy, and specific implementation plans and programmes for both of these curriculum areas. As one explained:

*We’ve set the policy and practices in maths and literacy. We’ve told the teachers that they have to do an hour of maths every day and half an hour of instructional reading every day. That’s now in concrete, there are no options.*

Both agreed that the aim of these seemingly rigid requirements was to “make a difference to students from entry to exit.” Their emphasis was on ensuring standardisation and consistency of teaching and assessment practices within classrooms so that information about student achievement, in these two areas particularly, was reliable and accurate. The need for this rigor came from observations and monitoring of teachers in these two curriculum areas. Assessment data collected showed some areas of concern in student achievement in numeracy and reading. It was also found that a few teachers appeared not to be catering sufficiently for student needs in mathematics and reading on a regular basis, which had led to the daily stringent teaching requirements being put in place. All three DPs were responsible for appraisals within the school and were, therefore, involved in helping teachers set their professional development goals. They mentioned that this role also allowed them to “get in and see what’s happening with the things that are prescribed.” The need for greater effective and streamlined teacher and school accountability systems for student progress was frequently mentioned by all senior management, and could have occurred a result of the ERO recommendation in the last report, as stated earlier.
The four middle management team leaders were responsible to the DPs. Their role was to work with the teachers in each syndicate to ensure that school policies and implementation plans were adhered to. Syndicate meetings were generally held weekly. The team leaders were responsible for checking that the teachers in their syndicate were up-to-date with the required assessment data collection and that portfolios were up-to-date. This saved the DPs time when they came in to do teacher appraisals as they could be “pretty sure all the information needed would be available and current.”

Some teachers who had leadership in curriculum areas other than mathematics and literacy, also reported to the first and second DP. The first two DPs identified possible leaders of these curriculum groups and approached them to take on the role. It was largely based on expressed or observed interest and possibly, strength in the area. The leaders were expected to set up the goals, intended programmes (based on the curriculum implementation plans), and the outcomes for the year under the guidance of the first DP. Other staff members who had an interest in the particular curriculum area would also become part of that curriculum team. A teacher could be a leader in one curriculum area and a member of another. Generally, teachers took part in one or two teams only. Meetings were held every other week, particularly in the curriculum areas that were school foci for the year. In the other curriculum areas, team members generally decided to meet when there was a perceived need. Leaders of the curriculum teams were required to write a report at the end of each year outlining the achievement of their goals and their suggestions for future growth.

The writing and reviewing of policy statements was initially done by the first DP in conjunction with teachers responsible for the curriculum area. These policies and plans were presented to the principal and then to the staff for their discussion and approval. The first DP was responsible for reporting to the board once a month on all matters related to curriculum. She provided the board with information on “where things are at with the curriculum, what the targets that have been set are, and how well we are achieving these goals.” The need to provide the board with greater “hard data” was expressed, hence the current push towards whole-school standardisation in mathematics and literacy assessment information particularly.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

The school generally had several whole-school curriculum foci for the year. This was where the majority of the professional development money was targeted. The people responsible for the curriculum area planned for any professional development requirements and requests were made to the principal and the Board of Trustees for the money needed. This year, the key foci appeared to be numeracy and literacy; the arts, in particular, dance and drama; and social studies. Next year, the school-wide focus would continue to be numeracy and literacy, with planning for science, teaching and assessment being the priority. The school had been involved in numerous Ministry of Education curriculum contracts and had made great use of the local school advisers for additional professional development help. The value of whole-school development was mentioned “as a way of ensuring everyone is involved and hears the same message.” Ministry of Education curriculum initiatives with the help of school advisers were seen as ways of “cutting costs” on professional development so that more could be spent on individual development and resources.
Individual professional development for teachers was linked to the school’s appraisal system. Teachers were expected to set their own personal professional goals each year, which were then discussed with their appraiser (one of the three DPs). Once these goals were agreed upon, approaches could then be made to the principal for the financial support to attend a course or to buy a resource. As one of the teachers interviewed said:

*The principal was really good. He encouraged professional development. You just go through the PD courses book, decide what you want to go to and see him. He will approve or disapprove them.*

### 2.3 Documents: School plans

As stated earlier, the first and second DP had overall responsibility for, and provided guidance in, the development and maintenance of the school’s curriculum policies, plans and practices. The principal was regularly consulted as to any new policies or plans being considered and had the ultimate responsibility for the decision to implement them. Staff were then consulted through curriculum teams and/or whole-school staff meetings. The community was informed about new policies through newsletters and all policies were freely available for parental viewing at the school. The Board of Trustees was regularly advised of new and reviewed curriculum policies and practices by the first DP.

The school had a strategic plan that set out the overall vision for all school organisation over a period of five years. It covered such things as curriculum, property, and the particular school focus such as ICT, social studies, or numeracy and literacy. The strategic plan served as the framework for current and future planning and financial considerations. It was explained that it was a “fluid” document so that ongoing needs and new ideas could be accommodated as they arose over time.

The school curriculum delivery policy recognised the *National Administration Guidelines*, *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, and the school charter. It stated that the purpose of the policy was to foster student achievement by providing a balanced curriculum in accordance with the above documents and requirements. It began with a “rationale” which stated that:

1. Children would be encouraged to develop a love for learning because all curriculum would be introduced through meaningful contexts. They will then see purpose for the knowledge, skills and understanding that they were acquiring.
2. The needs of the individual children would be the centre of all teaching, learning and assessing.

Guidelines for how these goals would be reached were provided. They were general statements outlining what was required. For instance:

1. Implement the national curriculum statements, which defined the learning philosophies, principles, aims and achievement objectives together with the essential skills.
2. Develop a variety of learning/teaching strategies, which were appropriate to the needs of each student.

This policy was generic so that it covered all curriculum areas. It was explained that the reasoning behind the school developing this kind of policy was that they wanted to avoid repetition. As the principal explained:
We felt that the type of comments we have in our general curriculum policy could pertain to all seven essential learning areas. We wanted a document that was easy for staff to understand what the requirements are, and why.

The impression gained from interviews was that this policy provided the overall framework for curriculum delivery but that the implementation plans for each curriculum area were the documents which, it was hoped, would be most frequently referred to and used by teachers.

All curriculum implementation plans were linked to the generic curriculum delivery policy. The school-wide focus on numeracy and literacy meant that the recent development of new implementation plan formats in these areas would serve as the pro forma for other areas as they were reviewed. Both the mathematics and English plans linked directly to the appropriate National Administration Guidelines. There were six sub-headings, which were addressed and linked to a NAG. They were:

Focus for learners - NAG 1;
Programme of learning - NAG 1 (iii, iv, vi);
School organisation - NAG 1 (i, iv);
Assessment - NAG 1 (ii), & NAG 2 (i);
Budget - NAG 4 (i); and
Resources - NAG 4 (i).

Each section provided a general guideline for what was expected. For instance, under the Programme for Learning heading it was expected that:

All planning objectives will be taken from the *Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum* and that planning should cover all strands of the curriculum at the level commensurate with the individual student’s ability.

The format for these plans was developed from professional development work that the first and second deputy principals had undertaken with mathematics and English local school advisers. The need for a more standardised format for all curriculum implementation plans was explained by the first DP:

*We found that we had a variety of formats in each curriculum area because each curriculum leader had developed their own, the way they thought best. We (first and second DPs) decided that it needed to be more consistent so that everyone was on the same wave-length as to what is required.*

By introducing the mathematics and English formats first, curriculum leaders in other areas would be able to use these as guides for updating their implementation plans. This updating process was seen as ongoing with implementation plans being reviewed at the end of each year by the curriculum team members and the first and second deputy principals. The first DP explained that the English and mathematics implementation plans ran on a two-year cycle with certain areas being highlighted in each of those years. She felt this system gave teachers and students “some structure, but also an enriched programme for learning.” Other curriculum areas also ran on a two-year cycle with major and minor curriculum foci for each year. It was explained that these implementation plans required updating and standardising. Teachers kept the implementation plans for mathematics and English in two separate portfolios, which also housed the teacher’s planning sheets and any other relevant paperwork that the teacher had developed. These folders were introduced by the two deputy principals for ease of monitoring and to ensure consistency across the school. A separate assessment folder was used to house all assessment information for all curriculum
areas; again, this was for ease of monitoring and aggregation, and ensured system standardisation and consistency across the school.

One of the deputy principals mentioned that she was not sure how often the teachers actually “go back to or use the individual implementation plans.” She thought that it was probably more likely that the curriculum and assessment requirement sheet provided for staff each term was of most use for ongoing classroom planning. This sheet was developed and distributed to teachers by the first and second deputy principals each term. It covered the curriculum foci requirements and acted as “a kind of reminder of what is expected to be covered during that time.” The sheet linked back to the key foci in the implementation plans for each curriculum area for that year. From this sheet, teachers were then expected to develop their own long-term plans.

Curriculum coverage sheets had also been developed by the first and second deputy principals to help teachers, both in planning and monitoring, as they endeavoured to provide a balanced programme. For example, the sheet was to be filled in during the year as teachers planned for or completed units of study in particular curriculum areas. These sheets were monitored during the year by team leaders and discussed with the first and second deputy principals during appraisal interviews. Links back to the curriculum requirements and assessment sheet were made at this time to monitor how well the teacher was implementing school systems.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

The school appeared to be well stocked with resources across the curriculum. A considerable emphasis had been on numeracy and literacy as well as ICT resources. Curriculum teams were responsible for the resourcing and policy development in each of their areas. Overall financial decisions were made by the principal once a case has been made by the curriculum team leader or one of the DPs. Resourcing of the school-wide foci was discussed by senior management and further consultation with the teachers was undertaken during a staff meeting or with the relevant curriculum team members. Large financial resourcing such as property and ICT was planned for over five years in the school strategic plan. As stated earlier, the generic curriculum delivery policy and individual implementation plans were reviewed on a yearly basis by senior management (first and second DPs primarily) and curriculum team leaders. Goals for resource spending were made at this time. The principal was consulted and advised on this process by the first and second deputy principals, and the Board of Trustees were informed regularly by the first DP on all curriculum reviews and spending.

2.5 Assessment policy

Assessment policy and practice appeared to play a large role in the school structure and systems. A focus on individual teacher accountability was emphasised in interviews with senior management. The principal stated that the school had experienced a number of different systems for collecting assessment information over the years. He described their current system, which had been going for about 12 months, as “no longer comparing apples with bananas but apples with apples so that the information we gather we are able to make genuine comparisons with from one group in one year to other groups in following years.” This, he felt, had made learning and teaching more effective and consistent across the school.
The assessment expectations were stated generally in the individual implementation plans for each curriculum area while a separate yearly assessment sheet outlined the testing that was to be done at particular times throughout the year. A further reminder of what was expected each term was stated in the curriculum and assessment requirement sheet discussed earlier. Ongoing testing and assessment in numeracy and literacy was standard from year to year but whole-school data in the particular area of focus for the year such as social studies, was also collected. The assessment sheet was developed by the second DP. Teachers were required to provide evidence of this testing and gathering of data which was to be placed in the assessment folder and kept by each teacher. The assessment folder housed all required assessment information, for example, standardised test results such as PATs, PRETOS, reading running records, as well as ongoing summative and formative tests and assessments in all curriculum areas. This folder was monitored by team leaders each term; the first and second DP checked the folder during appraisal discussions but a DP could also ask to see it at any time during the year.

School-wide assessment of numeracy and literacy achievement was a focus in the school. The second DP took a particular interest in the numeracy area and had developed structured planning and assessment formats. Pre- and post-testing was a feature of all numeracy teaching. These tests had been created by the second DP and were standardised throughout the school. She explained her reasoning for this system:

> It’s for consistency of what is being covered and how it is covered so that when we come to aggregate, we’re preparing the same stuff across the board. It’s an unfortunate but true fact that you just can’t trust everyone to cover what is required.

Similarly, the first DP had taken responsibility for the literacy programmes within the school and had implemented a structured assessment programme throughout the school to ensure consistency across classes.

It was from entry testing in numeracy that the push for a more consistent and monitored system arose. Until recently the school had focused their mathematics teaching at level 4. They had purchased level 4 textbooks as this was considered appropriate for intermediate-age students. However, when the second DP started collecting school-wide data and carefully analysing it, she realised that, on entry, a large number of their students were working at level 3. “We had to turn around and buy new textbooks because we just knew we were not meeting the needs of many children.” The school now had a standard entry test in mathematics and English and what they called their “exit” test at the end of the student’s final year at intermediate. Ongoing monitoring of student progress in numeracy was undertaken by the second DP at the end of every term when results were aggregated and given to class teachers so that the “gaps can be closed.” Regular monitoring of English achievement also occurred during the two years the students attended this school, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, and writing structure including spelling.

There appeared to be a clear link between the appraisal systems and assessment procedures in this school. Team leaders were responsible for the monitoring of the collection of assessment data by teachers, which was then used by the DPs during appraisal discussions. As one of the DPs commented, “We set ourselves a checklist. We look through to see that assessment is being done in all curriculum areas. Maths is easy, all results are entered into the computer, so it is easy to check who has not entered in the data.” It was hoped that next
year the school English assessment data would also be entered into the school’s computer
database.

The school was currently developing a new report system for parents. The current report
was a “tick box” format based on curriculum levels. The two deputy principals felt this did
not give the parents enough information. They stated, “We feel that just saying that a child
is at level 4 is way too broad. We need to be able to say that they were at the beginning of
level 4, the middle or the top end.” So it had been decided that the new report would have a
“best fit” aspect in mathematics and English with an A, B or C grading in these areas. At
this stage all other curriculum areas would still be reported on by levels. Parents’ reactions
to the new reports would be sought by the school. A link from the school-wide assessment
to the reports was made by the second DP:

Because the results are from the network computers, we are also going to be
able to look school-wide at where teachers think the kids fit and then do some
moderation. We may find that we have too many As so we might have to go
back to some teachers and see if they are being a bit too generous. They will
need to give us some evidence that they are As.

In the classroom, one of the teachers interviewed explained her assessment marking system,
“I used a ‘can do well,’ ‘can do,’ ‘cannot do yet’ or a ‘tick-circle-dot’ system before but
now I use the ‘1, 2, 3’ system that we have for mathematics. I use it pretty much now for
everything because it makes it easier to interpret across the board.” The same teacher
mentioned that she sometimes discussed assessment criteria with her students. “It is
important for them to know how to reach the highest quality piece of work that I am
looking for so I always have the criteria rubric [in] that I am marking them against on the
whiteboard.” Assessment rubrics had become more common practice within the school
over the past year as teachers had returned from professional development workshops with
different curriculum assessment rubrics to try out. All the teachers interviewed stated that
the students were encouraged to do some self-assessment generally in the form of, “What I
did well? What I would improve next time?”

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

As explained earlier, implementation plans were devised for each curriculum area and were
disseminated to all teaching staff to guide their unit and lesson planning. In line with the
National Administration Guidelines, emphasis was placed on literacy and numeracy
throughout the school. The overall responsibility for curriculum was in the hands of the
first DP while school-wide assessment planning and procedures was the responsibility of
the second DP, who also had a special interest in the numeracy programmes in the school.
Curriculum areas other than numeracy and English were co-ordinated by teaching staff who
had been “hand-picked” by the first and second DPs. Their role was to review set goals for
the year based on the curriculum implementation plans and report progress at the end of the
year. They were also responsible for the management and upkeep of curriculum resources
in their area.

Example: Mathematics

The school-wide organisation of mathematics had been discussed in earlier sections of this
case study. The second DP had devised a structured planning, implementation and
assessment programme for the school so that school-wide data analysis and aggregation could be undertaken. Her focus appeared to be to ensure that teachers in the school were planning and assessing student progress in mathematics regularly. This was so that achievement information could be collected and analysed for ongoing development needs in this area of the curriculum and for reporting purposes to parents and the Board of Trustees. The DP provided units of study for each teacher to implement, this was run on a two-year cycle with Number being the focus of about 80% of the teaching. Assessment requirements were clearly laid out for teachers as discussed earlier, all information being submitted onto a school-wide computer programme for analysis and aggregation by the DP. Students were streamed by ability in mathematics within each syndicate. Teachers planned, taught and assessed the ability group for which they were responsible. The teachers interviewed commented that this method of grouping allowed them to focus on “one level” and felt they were better able to cater for student needs as a result. A lack of textbooks was mentioned by one teacher as a problem for her as it meant that many of her students had to share textbooks, sometimes three students to one book, which she considered was not conducive to “productive learning.”

The systems put in place by the DP for the school-wide implementation of mathematics in classrooms was very structured with little apparent room for teacher interpretation or flexibility. As noted previously, the DP stated that this was a deliberate move on her part to ensure consistency of planning, teaching and assessing across the school. It appeared from interviews with teachers that this system was accepted by most as allowing them, as one teacher commented, “to get on with the teaching of what is seen as necessary without having to spend time planning and organising.”

3.2 Syndicate/team plans and programmes

It would appear that there were no specific systems in place requiring teams to plan co-operatively. The teachers interviewed varied in their experiences of team planning. One teacher stated her team usually planned areas such as social studies and science together, from the topics given to them by the curriculum committees. Two other teachers mentioned that they generally planned units of work individually.

All unit planning was based on individual curriculum implementation plans for which the curriculum and assessment requirements sheet was provided as a reminder of what was expected school-wide. Planning requirements for numeracy have been discussed above. Literacy planning requirements were provided by the first DP with some unit plans being provided for guidance. However, there was room for individual teacher interpretation of the strand being taught.

3.3 Classroom plans and programmes

To assist them in their classroom programme planning teachers commented that they used the following: the national curriculum documents; Ministry of Education handbooks; the school strategic plan; implementation plans; curriculum and assessment requirements; the assessment sheet; and long-term plans. ERO reported that teacher planning was based on the objectives and that it was consistent school-wide. They also mentioned a strong emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning. In interviews with teachers for this case study, it was noted that they sometimes shared their assessment criteria (usually in rubric form) with their students, who were then encouraged to use these as exemplars to work towards as a means of self-assessment.
Example: English lesson in a Year 7-8 class

I observed an English lesson in this class of approximately 34 Year 7 and Year 8 students. The lesson was derived from the school-wide curriculum and assessment requirements sheet and the English implementation plan. The teacher began the lesson with the class working on reading tasks (worksheets) while she took a small instructional reading group. The focus of the reading group appeared to be on reading for meaning. An in-depth discussion arose at one point from the story on what the future would be like for these students and what they hoped it would be like. The students were placed in ability groups for reading. The teacher had a timetable for conferencing with each group over the period of the week. When not working with the teacher, it appeared that each group had contract worksheets to complete. Daily instructional reading sessions of 30 minutes were required in every classroom in the school and were part of the first DP’s push to improve the reading performance (particularly in reading for meaning) of all students.

As per the curriculum and assessment requirement sheet for term three, the students were also working on developing speeches for an upcoming school-wide speech contest. After the reading session which lasted approximately 30 minutes, the students gathered on the mat for a whole-class teaching session about some aspects of speech writing. A recent unit on persuasive writing was reviewed and the teacher reminded the students of the need to convince the audience about the importance of their topic. The teacher reminded the students of the deadline for completion of their speeches and suggested that they should be worked on at home. The assessment criteria rubric (developed by the DP) for this topic was on display in the classroom and students had copies in their books. The teacher encouraged them to use this when writing their speech.

The third part of the lesson was aimed at introducing the students to the idea of “vivid imagery” in writing. This, too, linked to English requirements in the curriculum and assessment sheet set down for term three. A whole-class brainstorm followed with students sharing their ideas about imagery writing and why it was important in a piece of writing. The teacher then talked about how it fitted into the curriculum document, the poetic writing strand. The lesson concluded with models of writing which included examples of vivid imagery and the students being asked to identify where they were.

In the interview after the observation, the teacher described her passion for English and how she felt that this had made it easier to teach the subject well. She noted that she had been involved in a number of Ministry of Education professional development workshops in this area over her years of teaching. She stated that she liked using the English document and knew it “inside and out now.” She felt the generic nature of the objectives allowed room for teacher interpretation to meet individual student needs. However, she did mention that she sometimes wondered if the rather “general” nature of the curriculum documents meant that:

What I read and interpret from a document might be very different to what someone else might understand from it and I wonder sometimes if children are learning very different things from the same objective.

In terms of the school-wide planning and assessment systems, the teacher commented that she had only been at the school just over a year and had found “keeping up” with the paperwork and the requirements a challenge at first. However, she was now beginning to
feel more comfortable with the systems and at the same time was still able to “be herself” as well as fit in to the “have-tos.”

All units of study for this teacher came straight from the school policy and guidelines. When planning a unit of work in curriculum areas, she first went to the curriculum document and found the relevant achievement objectives. Interestingly, the teacher described how she had spiral-bound all the achievement objectives from each curriculum area into one book for ease of reference. This included some of the suggested activities from each area also. The objectives for each unit were always in full view in the classroom so, “I know that I’m heading in the right direction, that we haven’t digressed, and if we have, what I need to change to get back on course.”

The next step in planning for this teacher came when she asked herself what she wanted her students to learn from this unit and identified any cross-curricular links that might be appropriate to incorporate into her plan. She looked at ways to assess the objectives (both summative and formative) and then began to develop the learning experiences to accommodate all of the above. Her learning experiences were written in sequential order so that she had a direction of where each session would head. She added that she had tried to identify any essential skills that were relevant to the objectives and include them in her plan.

Day-to-day lesson planning came directly from her unit plans and generally followed the sequential plans for learning experiences. However, she did comment, “Sometimes units don’t go in the way that you think they are going to so you have to come back, re-assess yourself and where the class is going and change things to suit.” This teacher also did weekly grouping plans for mathematics and reading. This helped her to ensure that all needs were being met in both these curriculum areas. She explained that the groups were flexible, for example, pre-tests in topic areas and running records in reading, depending on the composition of each group. A daily timetable was developed for each term which set out the organisation of the classroom programme. The teacher noted, “In a busy school like this one, timetables had to remain flexible because of unexpected interruptions to the programme.” This school offered a number of extra options for students in music, languages and education outside the classroom during school time which meant that some students were “coming and going frequently,” leading to planned programmes being somewhat disjointed at times.

Her assessment systems largely fitted in with the school requirements and methods of recording. Mathematics assessments were standardised across the school, as were many of her English ones. However, in other curriculum areas she had adopted the number marking system used in mathematics. She reasoned that this was the most consistent way to do things, although not yet required by the school, in any area other than mathematics. Assessment criteria rubrics were used for most units of study and the children were encouraged to use them for self-assessment purposes. The teacher commented that the main issue she had with assessment was:

> Trying to have the balance right across the board in all subjects and letting the students know what they’re doing well and what they need to do next. Sometimes I feel that our assessments become old very quickly so that two weeks down the track, you could find that what you thought they knew then, they now don’t.
Essential skills, although planned for and taught, were not generally assessed. The teacher felt that these skills were really preparing children with life skills and she thought, “You can’t really assess whether they have a life skill until they show they are using it, which is not really possible at school.”

Resources were felt to be generally freely available in the school and the Ministry of Education supplements were seen as, “very useful material for planning.” The teacher commented on the amount of ready-made worksheets available for teachers which she saw as “potentially dangerous short-cuts if used too often.” She stated, “I have a firm belief that if you don’t have ownership of the planning it doesn’t work.” Interestingly, the reading lesson observed in her class was structured very much around worksheets for those students not working with the teacher. The teacher also mentioned using the Ministry of Education website Te Kete Ipurangi often as a valuable resource but again reiterated the need to “make it your own,” to suit the needs of the school and the students.

4.0 Discussion of findings

The school systems for curriculum policy, planning and delivery were linked to the National Administration Guidelines and the curriculum documents and were interpreted to meet the school’s individual needs. Numeracy and literacy had a high profile in policy and planning, which was consistent with the NAG requirements, and there was a push for accountability and consistency in planning, teaching and assessment across the school in these two areas particularly. It was also recognised by management that there was a need to develop effective methods of collecting achievement information across the school so that they would be able to set achievable goals for the new Ministry of Education planning and reporting requirements which the school needed to adhere to from 2003.

Overall, there was a clear desire expressed by all who took part in this study to improve the learning experiences and achievement of the children in this school through ongoing reflection and self-review. As one of the DPs commented, “We are always evolving, always changing, not just for the sake of change, but for the learners in our school.”

The school’s management team, in particular, the first and second deputy principals, had overall responsibility for curriculum and assessment. They both played an active role in the development of systems to enable teachers to collect information about student achievement, which was then collated and analysed so that the ongoing needs of students were identified and catered for. The DPs reported directly to the principal who had entrusted them with this responsibility in order to streamline the management within his school more effectively. It appeared that in recent years, specific school-wide structures had been put in place to ensure greater teacher accountability of what was happening in their classroom programmes. Suggestions were made by the DPs that the somewhat “top-down” approach to management, in numeracy and literacy particularly, was due to some teachers “not providing students with adequate coverage of much needed knowledge and skills in literacy and mathematics.” School-wide analysis and aggregation of data was seen as a valuable method of keeping track of teacher-classroom practices as well as student achievement. There appeared to have been a complete overhaul of the policies, planning and assessment systems, and procedures in these two curriculum areas and other curriculum areas were now earmarked for similar treatment by the management team over the next few years. This could possibly be due to the ERO recommendation regarding the need for the
school to “improve their quality assurance and monitoring systems to ensure the school’s high expectations are met.”

Teachers were involved in curriculum teams, with some responsibility for goal-setting and planning, as well as resource management. However, it appeared that overall management of the curriculum was largely undertaken by the deputy principals, who appeared to consciously “hold the power.”

Planning and assessment procedures were clearly set out for teachers and there were clear links back to the strategic plan and National Administration Guidelines about which teachers appeared to be aware. It seemed - to an outsider - to be a rather extensive “paper trail” for teachers to comply with and complete. These included: implementation plans, curriculum and assessment requirement sheets, a separate assessment reminder sheet and curriculum coverage sheets, two separate portfolios for English and mathematics, another for other curriculum areas, and a separate assessment folder for all information gathered. However, when interviewed, teachers appeared to be satisfied with the amount of compliance required and stated that because the major areas of numeracy and literacy were largely planned by management, they felt their workload was somewhat reduced. However, one beginning teacher did comment that she was finding it difficult to keep up with all the planning and assessment requirements and yet still include “something of my own.” She concluded that this was probably due to her inexperience as well as the many changes happening within the school regarding curriculum implementation.

At the classroom level, unit planning from the perspective of the teachers interviewed appeared to be generally undertaken by individual teachers using the school-wide implementation plans and other requirements rather than being co-operatively planned in team groups. The curriculum documents were used in planning with learning experiences and resources having been developed from the curriculum objectives. Some teachers had the curriculum objectives visible in the classroom for their own use and the information of the students. Assessment criteria was also visible, frequently in rubric form, for student use in ongoing monitoring and self-assessment.

It was clear when looking at the class timetable included here, that the school expectations on how much time should be spent on numeracy (one hour daily) and literacy (reading 30 minutes daily) influenced what else could be covered each day. A large proportion of class time each week was taken up with these two areas. Several of the younger teachers noted that they would like to be able to integrate the curriculum more but felt unable to do this because of the tight school planning and assessment systems, particularly in mathematics and literacy, which they viewed as dominating their daily programmes. However, a more experienced teacher reported that she had tried to integrate some topic areas during this time so that other curriculum areas were not being treated as “the poor cousins.”

Overall, this school was clearly engaged in the process of ongoing curriculum review in order to enhance and improve the learning experiences of the students in the school. The need for a focus on accountability and consistency was well explained. However, a danger could be that in the process of ensuring “high quality assurance and monitoring” (ERO, 2000) that the school could succumb to an emphasis on “product” rather than “process” with little room for individualism and innovation.
The first DP reflected on the push for school-wide data collection this way:

*This is an exciting time for us. From the information we collect, we are going to be able to use this historical data to set targets, make plans and take action. Over time it will be really good to see if we have made a difference.*

5.0 Summary

- The organisation and management of the curriculum school-wide was well structured with clear policies and planning in place.
- The *National Administration Guidelines* were linked to the school self-review, policies, and planning.
- There was a climate of reflection and review, focusing on improving the planning and reporting of curriculum information school-wide.
- Overall curriculum and assessment responsibility rested with the first and second deputy principals.
- Team (syndicate) leaders ensured that school policies and implementation plans were adhered to. They monitored their team’s recording of planning and assessment for the deputy principals.
- Literacy and numeracy were a high priority in the school with specific times allotted each day for both areas.
- There was a focus on accountability and consistency in the planning, teaching, and assessment of curriculum across the school. This process was co-ordinated and monitored by the first and second deputy principals.
- School-wide procedures for curriculum implementation, which were linked to the *National Administration Guidelines* and the school curriculum delivery policies were in place with teachers using the systems in their classroom programmes.
- Teachers planned using the curriculum documents, generally starting with the achievement objectives from each area.
- Regular co-operative planning in teams did not occur, a number of teachers planning units of work individually.
- The essential skills were identified and highlighted in planning but generally teachers appeared to be uncertain how to “assess” them, or wondered if it was necessary to assess them at all.
- Assessment, particularly in mathematics and English, was a high priority, with pre- and post-test information being collated and aggregated for use in classroom practice improvements and reporting to the Board of Trustees and parents.
- Recording of planning and assessment information was gradually being standardised across the school.
- Standardised systems for the storing of curriculum information were well in place with portfolios being used to store assessment and other information in mathematics and English. Information collected in planning and assessment was monitored each term by team leaders and by the deputy principals during appraisal discussions.
• There was a push to get all curriculum assessment information onto a school-wide computer system in order to make information dissemination and monitoring more efficient.

• In areas other than numeracy and literacy, teachers had responsibility for curriculum in teams. Leaders of curriculum were generally chosen by the first and second deputy principals through observation of interest or strength in the particular area.

• Professional development for teachers was linked to appraisal in the school, teachers nominating areas for development and negotiating finances for courses with the principal.

• The school was well resourced with money being targeted each year for the specific curriculum areas of focus.

• The recent ERO report and Ministry of Education planning and reporting requirements might possibly have influenced the push for school-wide accountability systems in planning and reporting of student achievement.

• A possible danger of this focus could be a concentration on “product” rather than “process” in curriculum delivery resulting in compliance rather than innovation.

**SL3: An integrated secondary school in a large city**

1.0 Description

This school was an integrated, secondary (Years 7-13), boys’ school in a large city. The student population of 414 was made up of 78% Pakeha; 6% Māori; 14% Asian; and Pasifika 2%. Thirty-two of the students (7%) were foreign fee-paying students. This decile 8 school was established 40 years ago on this site as part of a tradition 200 years old. Over recent years, the school had undertaken considerable building development and refurbishment with further specialist rooms being planned for completion in the near future.

The school had just under 30 teaching staff and approximately one third of these were women including one in senior management. A new principal (2001), and a new assistant principal (AP) assumed responsibility for curriculum. Senior management in the school used “a team approach” with formalised structures and procedures providing direction for faculty heads and teachers. The principal acknowledged that a small school could be isolating for staff and that the school’s very stable staff were “probably too stable” with many teachers having taught at the school for a long time. The principal explained that staff who had been there 10 years could be considered “newcomers.”

The latest ERO report (2002) stated that strong Christian values were the foundation of a caring, supportive environment “encouraging service to others and providing opportunities for the development of leadership skills.” The school had a small but very strong community of parents and friends whom the principal considered “special” for a secondary school.

The school’s annual report for 2001 identified eight barriers to learning. Three of these related to curriculum. They were: (1) crowded curriculum and timetable; (2) loss of teaching time; and (3) shortages of resources. The new curriculum areas such as health and
technology were squeezing an already full timetable that also included religious education. The current government’s emphasis on literacy and numeracy also saw a broader range of subjects being squeezed for time. Secondary schools were meeting expectations for education outside the classroom, in sport and cultural activities. However, these activities significantly reduced class contact time and although individually worthy, had a cumulative effect which had become “toxic to good learning attitudes” according to the head of mathematics. The ERO report (2002) noted that students were assisted in their all-round development by the breadth of learning opportunities and experiences that the college curriculum provided staff and students with including sporting and cultural activities. However, the competing demands of class and extra curricular programmes, particularly on senior students, at times created tensions and difficulties.

Staff illness and leave had impacted on the quality of learning in certain curriculum areas, as had increased stress relating to the pressures of the change process, and increased “administrivia” (a word used by the head of science) had further affected student learning in a less direct way.

There were two student issues that were also believed to have had a negative impact on curriculum learning. They were. first, most of the students had some form of paid employment affecting study time and extra curricular involvement. It was noted (by the head of mathematics) that students were sometimes reluctant to sacrifice earning opportunities in Year 13 when the value of Bursary was so low that higher grades brought little reward. Second, the language ability of some students, particularly overseas students, was inadequate for their level of study. Poor English language skills impacted directly on students’ understanding of material in textbooks and other written resource material. Increasingly, it was noted (by the head of science) that there was an issue for this school concerning New Zealand-born students who had learning difficulties relating to language.

Staff and students demonstrated a high level of loyalty to the college.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The senior management team met once a week with a focus on policy and planning. The principal highlighted the importance of the national curriculum framework to senior management and stressed that the framework provided an overview with clear guidance on such tasks as priorities/timetable allocations and the essential skills. Staff meetings occurred once a week with a staff briefing every morning. The heads of faculty (HOF) had their own meetings and the minutes of these went to the principal. Student support and special character representatives were present at the HOF meetings.

The AP headed a curriculum development committee. An external review of all faculties was carried out in 2001 and the findings had proved useful in improving curriculum delivery. As part of this development, a new curriculum plan had provided the framework for the ongoing management of the school curriculum, and guidelines for heads of faculty. This plan, however, had not been operational for long enough to evaluate its impact.

ERO (2002) had noted a need for more student-centred work based simply on seeing teachers in the front of classrooms. The AP pointed out that there was an increased awareness of this issue and the need for a variety of teaching methods. Some teaching
styles needed extended observation to reveal what was really going on. It seemed to be structured in a way that provided order and routine, a variety of teaching methods, and an overriding concern for the students to develop both personally and academically.

2.2 Professional development policy for curriculum

With a new staff appraisal system in place, the appointment of a new AP added momentum to curriculum developments and working together. The school-wide professional development programme for staff in 2002 was on assessment practices. This programme utilised teams and group presentations to emphasise sharing and collaboration, the intention being to maximise the longitudinal potential from all professional development. To continue to improve curriculum provision, the school was looking at working with other schools more. This process had begun through NCEA training days and such actions as using external reviewers for HOF (systems of management, delivering curriculum and teaching and learning). As a result of this review, there was greater support at all levels for a change in the way faculty heads were selected to focus more on curriculum rather than spiritual leadership qualities.

2.3 Documents: School plans

The ERO report noted that curriculum management had been strengthened over the last year with a school-wide curriculum plan to promote greater consistency of curriculum delivery across faculties. The principal and AP believed that programmes at Years 7-10 needed more work regarding “translating” the achievement objectives and essential skills. For Years 7 and 8, further use of integration was seen as a way of covering the required subject learning objectives within tight timetables.

2.4 Resources: Allocation and policies

The AP shared that, for her, an indicator of the variety of teaching styles being used was in staff requests for classroom resources. For example, learner-centred teaching required a greater need of resources such as glue, scissors, poster paper, video, and overhead projector (OHP). Technology resources indicated the variety of teaching styles that were used. She acknowledged that compared to other schools where she had had experience, that classroom budgets were low at this school.

2.5 Assessment policy

The ERO report (2002) stated that the school provided a breadth of learning opportunities and experiences with a strong commitment to supporting student learning for Year 13 while students in Years 9 and 10 were encouraged to have a mature approach to their work and were assessed on attitude, and homework, as well as class work.

The principal believed that assessment would continue to need work, as Year 7-10 students tended to be assessed globally (such as in terms of attitude and completion of homework) and he acknowledged that the traditional teaching staff focused on top-end classes and external assessment. He also was of the opinion that even experienced subject departments with sound curriculum teaching such as science had trouble assessing the essential skills.

The two departments that were the focus of this study, science and technology, were described by senior management as follows:
Science was a well delivered area with an experienced HOD who ran a more traditional, well functioning department that was well resourced, well documented and well organised with good systems and good guidance.

The technology department had a new HOD who was learning the job and about to be trained as a moderator - he was keen and it was good for him and the school. The documentation was under development in the year of interview, the food technology area being not yet operational, but the proposed new building would help with that.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

Example: Science

This was a department of experienced and established staff, which the principal described as well focused and sound in their teaching (“biology may be a bit shaky”, but he did not elaborate).

Each year, curriculum planning in science was reviewed as a departmental team. In the science scheme, this included the Year plan and assessment. This scheme defined the terms and weeks when units would ideally start and when assessment would take place. Year 7-10 science was largely textbook-based with other units written by staff. For example, the programme at Year 9 was divided into 5 units:

Unit 1 was an introduction to laboratory skills (levels 3-4 investigative skills and attitudes of the national curriculum).

Units 2-5 were based on areas of knowledge as defined by the national curriculum, Making Sense of the Living World; Making Sense of the Material World, Making Sense of the Physical World, and Making Sense of Planet Earth and Beyond.

Units 3 and 4 were split into two parts and unit 2 was split into three. These units or parts of units were two, three or four weeks long and followed a set cycle through the year. Objectives for each unit were noted under the title of the unit or part of the unit in the planning cycle documented in the scheme (for example, Material World Objectives M4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2 and S&T 5.2).

A time allocation for science fair projects was not specified in the plans but was noted as a required addition. Assessment, it was noted, relied on a combination of practical and written tests, and student-prepared posters.

Science teachers, as a team, developed and revised any tests. Discussions focused on the analysis of the results; they also made judgements about student achievement, for example, recorded on a specially designed student achievement summary sheet that both related directly to the national curriculum statement for science and the “excellence,” “merit,” “achieved,” and “not achieved” scale- system of the NCEA. Thus, science scheme planning was used as a guide only as difficulties in sticking to the ideal plan arose due to the other commitments of the school and staff.
Science teachers trialled a system for following Year 9 students’ progress through the national curriculum strands and found it a difficult task. Modifications to the system focused on being able to record information in a user-friendly format. However, there was a workable system in place for 2002 and the use of this system had been extended to cover the progress of Year 7, 8 and 10 students.

The head of science was concerned with staff overload. It was noted that the amount of paperwork and administration required of teachers was impacting, to a greater or lesser extent, on classroom performance.

3.2 Classroom plans and programmes

*Example: The science lesson*

A lesson was observed, it was No. 11 in the second part of the *Material World* cycle and was to enable the students to recognise that properties of elements changed when they formed compounds.

The teacher of this science class adopted a whole-student approach, touching on world events and emphasising an awareness and concern for others before collecting homework and reviewing the previous lessons through a sequence of questions. There were step-by-step instructions on safety operations and the initial steps of writing up the experiment. It was emphasised that observation would be required before the class split into self-chosen groups, collected their equipment or proceeded with the experiment. The experiment required that they heat a pyrex test-tube containing sulphur and steel-wool over a burner using tongs, and to observe what happened. The forming of groups and equipment collection was routine for the students including the use of safety glasses. The teacher circulated about the groups giving further instructions on the operation of equipment; however, the aim of the lesson was not clear for the students when I asked. These students knew they had to observe *what* had occurred but did not know *what* they were looking for or *why*.

The students then returned to their desks for writing notes and for review time with the teacher who prompted them with questions. There was opportunity for the students to complete their records as the teacher checked the group areas. Two students were asked to read out the written work they had completed during this time. Then the teacher led them on a stage showing them how they could confirm that it was a new compound that they had made, and the students moved back to their group areas to complete the test.

Equipment was tidied promptly. It was hard to tell what had been completed in workbooks at this point. Homework was set from the text and then the students left. There was a sense of calm and patience throughout the lesson. The pace seemed to suit the students well as no-one was flustered and all had a chance to record with enough support to be confident that they knew what to write down. Key words were written on the whiteboard, as was the homework, although the homework was written after the students left. The lesson came across as systematic, well structured and well monitored.

Further emphasis on the lesson objectives would have helped support student learning and achievement.
Example: The technology lesson

Teachers had yet to complete the unit planning needed to fully implement the technology curriculum. Best examples were observed at Year 9 where detailed plans that related delivery to the national achievement objectives had been developed.

The lack of specific learning outcomes and related assessment criteria in technology limited the quality of feedback students received and the assessment information teachers recorded.

The over-emphasis on teacher-centred delivery identified in the 1997 ERO review was still evident in some classes in technology (2002):

The predominance of teacher-centred approaches in these classes does not adequately cater for the differing learning styles and needs of the students. Students were not given sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop the skills specified in the NZ Curriculum Framework.

This factor was acknowledged by senior management.

The recommended or required documentation in department management documents (for Faculties) was not always used (or their use monitored) in this school. The reason for this appeared primarily to be that Faculties had a relatively small fulltime staff. These staff were, commonly, very experienced and had been at the school for a number of years. HOF devolved responsibility for the programmes and documentation largely to colleagues within subject departments, some of whom could have been at the school longer than the HOF.

There were exceptions. The way planning was carried out in the technology area was that the department would meet to discuss details, and then a draft version would be written by the teacher who had primary responsibility for that course; modifications were made through the input of the other departmental teachers at subsequent meetings. Student report forms for all technology subjects were also developed and revised collaboratively so that whatever subject the student had covered during the report period, each section was filled in. It was considered very important not to have any blank areas on the final report forms that students took home.

There was dependence on the use of a textbook for some technological areas, particularly content to do with safety equipment and recognising hazards, for example, safety procedures and safe tool use.

A new HOF for technology had been appointed and the principal explained that he was not sure how it was going “as he seemed unsure of himself, but was earnest and his heart was in the right place.”

Graphics information technology, and technology made up the core at Year 9 with each subject getting a third of the year’s timetable (three periods per week). Technology was a programme that was developed to cover the required technology areas at the appropriate levels. Design technology was an option for Years 11, 12, and 13. Graphics and information technology continued to Year 13. Year 10 technology and graphics were options although all Year 10s participated in a two-week technology challenge. While there was no biotechnology or food technology at Year 10, graphics was included. In practice,
there was an emphasis on materials technology with woodwork and metal work; information and communication technology, electronics and control, and some food technology focused on production and processes.

Both the technology education programme overview and the unit plan came from Ministry contract material from 1999. The overview had columns for information on each unit that was to be undertaken. There was space for only the briefest of notes under each of the strands, technological areas, contexts and identification of essential skills. A coding system of ticks highlighted those aspects that would be a major focus.

Each unit had a full-page unit plan that included an overview of the technological areas, context, Year level, and essential skills - to be written in or ticked. This plan had check-boxes beside a full list of achievement objectives so that the teacher could readily highlight those that were to be covered and those to be assessed within the unit. There was space for brief notes under the headings of: introductory activities; resources; learning outcomes; and assessment.

There was evidence of working towards further cohesion such as common unit planning formats and student report forms that were to be used by all technology teachers. The report forms used “not achieved,” “achieved,” “merit,” and “excellent” categories for indicating student achievement at Years 7, 8 and 9. Reports for these years were similar in that there were two objectives under each of Strand A and B from the curriculum document, and one for Strand C.

Strand A: Technology and understanding: (1) investigates and explains the use and operation of technologies; and (2) identifies strategies in communication technology.

Strand B: Technological capability: (1) identifies issues and explores suitable strategies; and (2) justifies and evaluates choices, strategies and outcomes.

Strand C: Technology and society: identifies and compares technological development within the community. There are two lines at the bottom of the form for comments. The report forms note that assessment data are collected through a combination of observation, conferencing, workbooks, informal and formal testing.

In the information given to students, it was noted that assessment would include self-evaluation and peer evaluation as well as teacher evaluation. The students and parents were told, via this information sheet, that the teacher would be assessing:

- the layout, presentation, communication of ideas and design work in student workbooks;
- skill in planning and production of independent projects;
- the working qualities and aesthetic appeal of the finished project;
- each student’s verbal and graphic communication and problem-solving abilities.

Barriers to learning identified by the head of this department included the fact that small class numbers meant some combined levels in classrooms could be a struggle for teachers. Also, the equipment in some areas, such as graphics, was of poor quality and not easy to use.
The annual report 2001 reported that senior students’ marks were disappointing when it was believed students were capable of better. However tight timetables meant that students taking single technology areas at senior level did so with little prior knowledge of the subject. Technology itself was not a Bursary subject.

The teacher’s folder contained: a title page; a copy of the technology policy and statement and departmental goals for the current year; the department’s practical and organisational procedures; a copy of both the NEGS and NAGS; and the curriculum framework document (although there was no evidence that these had been used). Copies of the relevant technology education material, was also included.

Example: The lesson

After introducing me to the class, the teacher gave a brief outline of the activities for the day’s lesson including some safety questions. Students then started promptly on their individual projects moving freely around equipment and group tables, talking and using tools in turn, working on their practical projects. The room appeared to be very well equipped including a range of expensive and serious looking machines. The students’ workbooks included photocopied worksheets on safety issues and instruction sheets for particular practical projects. The workbooks were in various states of repair. The students explained, in detail, what they were working on, how the parts of the project would fit together and what the finished article would look like. The room was very noisy once activity started.

Documentation in each department followed a standard format. Evidence in both these curriculum areas I observed showed “imported” formats and versions of written documentation that had been collected through formal and informal contact with teachers from other schools. Some of this material had been filed in curriculum folders in the original format and some had been modified as the basis for use within the layers of curriculum documentation in this school. These layers consisted of unit plans; programme overviews (tracking sheets) for each year; and class level policy statements or schemes which may also be called departmental management documents alongside school-wide senior assessment procedures - the school’s curriculum plan. Then above that sat The New Zealand Curriculum Framework with the school charter considered most important of all.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This school had a strong sense of tradition and a commitment to its special religious character. There was a school-wide curriculum committee which had, with senior management, developed policies and procedures to achieve consistency across faculties and departments. The school charter, the national curriculum documents, departments schemes (policy) and the unit plans were linked. It was difficult to assess the degree of consistency.

There was a perceived need among senior management staff for more student-centred classroom work. Assessment strategies were being developed; some regarded these as “too global.” It was noted that efforts had been made to get better links between departments and faculties.
5.0 Summary

- The school was organised on a faculty basis. The head of faculty had responsibility for the performance of the faculty team.
- Faculties had policies, plans and standard assessment rubrics across classes and the focus of teachers was often on senior (Year 11-13) classes.
- Year 7-10 students were assessed using NCEA standards (“not achieved,” “achieved,” “merit,” and “excellent.”)
- The ethos of the school was caring and the emphasis was on Christian values, encouraging service to others and providing opportunities for development of leadership skills.

S2: An inner city secondary school

1.0 Description

This was a co-educational secondary school in the middle of a regional city. The student population of 1391 was made up of 62% Pakeha; 8% Chinese; Other Asian 16%; 7% Māori; 1% Samoan; Other Pasifika 1%; and Other 5%. This population was described as an “all age multicultural community” and as such, the students had diverse learning needs. The student population was mobile and commonly weak in the essential skills. Aside from English, it was made up from 55 countries and 39 different first languages. There was a 60-40 ratio between girls and boys. The majority of students (93%) studied in the senior college with 421 of them being adult students. This decile 6 school used highly developed data analysis and evaluation to seek out innovative solutions to any issues affecting students and staff. As a large secondary school, it saw itself as unique in providing teenagers and adults with opportunities to learn and achieve. There were high expectations of meeting individual student needs and of student achievement. ERO (2000) reported that the college was “a supportive, accepting environment for the expression of individuality and encourages them to be responsible for their own behaviour.”

There were approximately 85 teaching staff, who the principal described as “conservative but open to change.” The principal’s vision and strategic thinking guided a culture that supported innovation and change. The principal’s team operated in a fully integrated yet professionally responsible and capable manner. Their knowledge, capability, approachability, and dedication to their areas of responsibility was very impressive. One assistant principal emphasised that pastoral care was a priority across departments and that staff had the attitude that everyone was “all in it together” and that it was “never too late to learn.” Indeed, the oldest member of staff was over 75 years old.

The latest ERO report (2000) stated that this school was unique:

It [the school] had outstanding strategic and operational plans. The goals and key performance indicators in these documents allow focused efforts and the collection of valuable data on student achievement, which was then used to identify successes and improve the performance of the school as a whole. The focus on learning and innovation was evident in the culture of the school and ERO believed was “a critical feature in its success.”
2.0 School systems

The school ran on a system of devolved responsibility. This required that staff strongly aligned their beliefs to the strategic plan and vision for the college. The principal’s team had the strategic function providing peer review and guidance. There was also a senior management team that fulfilled an operational and management role. Senior management consisted of the directors of all the school’s portfolio areas including enrolment, marketing, performance appraisal, ICT systems, programmes, and teaching and learning. The 13 portfolio areas linked back into the vision of the college and also included operations. Many of these areas had working committees with representatives from various groups and sectors on them, which also helped maintain a “heads-up” position. The principal met with the directors of each of the portfolios once a week and the directors meet collectively each week. The principal’s team also met each week. On alternate weeks during school time, all staff met for a principal’s meeting at which the principal controlled the agenda, and the other week there was a staff meeting in the same time slot when the staff controlled the agenda.

The principal considered an important part of his role on strategic thinking was about how the school could create learning opportunities for students in a meaningful and effective way and be proactive in the positioning of the college to allow this to happen. The principal identified the diversity of learning needs in the student population as a key issue. The examining and untangling of learning barriers involved “a team approach to investigate what was possible and turn the crazy idea into a working model.”

The curriculum co-ordinator believed a curriculum “mainstay” was The New Zealand Curriculum Framework document and, in particular, the essential skills on p. 17. Although staff acknowledged there were variations in the curriculum statements, they felt they were similar and were of the opinion that departments dealt with them through developing schemes of work outlining content, activities, timeframes and resources. This school put the essential skills “at the front end” of the curriculum, assigning a value to them through a learning log system of credits.

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

ERO (2000) believed that the curriculum in this school was well planned and comprehensive. The focus was on designing pathways and programmes that would help students go on to higher learning. There were specialised provisions for students with non-English speaking backgrounds. An example of this was the way instructions were given for using the tools in the materials technology workshop; that is, instruction sheets were provided in Chinese, Korean, and English.

According to the principal’s annual report (May, 2002), “This school has a broad and comprehensive curriculum profile.” By responding to regular reviews, roll analysis, and student enrolment choices, there was a 12% change in courses from 2001 to 2002. The roll analysis comprehensively analysed the number of students enrolled in classes year by year. This information supported both curriculum profile and staffing decisions for the following year.

In 1998, an innovative junior college programme based on a system for assessing students’ achievement in each of the essential skills was introduced. The Diploma in Learning was designed to ensure students had the necessary learning skills to be successful at subsequent
levels. The system aimed to motivate students through programmes set at an appropriate level of student learning and with specific feedback from teachers. This programme used a credit system to determine a student’s readiness for graduation with a Diploma in Learning at the end of Year 10. The allocation of credits gave an indication of the relative priorities for subjects at this school. At Years 9 and 10, mathematics and English were worth 150; social studies, science and PE were worth 120; health, and the learning log were worth 80; and home economics was worth 40. Students were also required to complete modules. The modules were all worth 25 credits and were designed as tasters to enable students to make an informed choice of subjects at Year 11. Modules consisted of 26 hours at two hours per week for 13 weeks. At Year 9, the modules listed were: food technology, materials, technology and design technology, ICT skills, Te Reo Māori, and drama. At Year 10, the modules listed were: art, film, Te Reo Māori, music, graphics, and textiles.

Technology and health curriculum areas were introduced in 1999 and the new arts curriculum in 2002. Graphics and technology continued to be a focus on the development of new courses for 2002. The use of a module system at Years 9-10 (three arts subjects and three technology subjects of 13 weeks’ duration) enabled the school to offer the range required. The crowded curriculum at Years 9-10 was believed to be a huge disadvantage for students. The assistant principal (AP) believed that due to the range of subjects included under the national curriculum framework and the difficulties in timetabling (giving rise to modules) that students were actually specialising earlier than they used to. For example, students could focus on technology options (materials, graphics, design, ICT) or arts (music, drama, etc) options at the expense of more variety at this level. This school had relieved some timetabling difficulties by extending the school’s programme hours. Essentially, the school operated two teaching weeks in one. This also provided students with the choice to study outside the normal school day.

There were still questions arising from the issue, “Where does my subject fit in the national curriculum?” This was especially true in this school with its broad range of subjects. Subject areas such as home economics fell between technology and the new health and PE curriculum areas and accounting and economics teachers continued to ask, “Where did these subject areas fit?”

Years 11, 12 and 13 at this school were focused upon catering for a student population that had a large number of adults and a huge number of subjects including locally developed pre-entry courses and courses designed to lead to university study pathways such as psychology and philosophy. At the senior level, the focus was on providing students with pathways to further study and on supporting their sense of direction.

2.2 Documents: School plans

The principal of this school believed that the curriculum framework document was interesting and well thought out. However, his view was that it was below this that it went wrong. He said:

[I have] great admiration for the curriculum framework. I think it is a very interesting and well thought-out document that is not used enough. So with the learning areas they are well described in terms of generic nature of what they are, and in terms of essential skill areas I think they are tremendous. It goes wrong from that document and the biggest area where it goes wrong is in the essential learning skills.
Although each curriculum document is significant in size with an enormous amount of material included, this principal felt that the essential skills information was largely superficial at the individual curriculum area level. The development of these documents as separate subject areas had meant, he believed, that the overall concepts of learning how to learn in addition to the skills that students needed to bring to the classroom, had been lost.

The principal believed that the design of the curriculum documents was misplaced. He explained that the overarching perspective of the curriculum framework was great but the specialists who wrote each of the curriculum area documents were at the top end of a chain of enthusiasts. The outcome of this was that each document was designed to be the biggest and best of the area without regard for the provision of other subject areas. This principal went on to say that the documents themselves don’t follow the same design and the essential learning areas were not dealt with in the same manner in all areas. These things, he believed, had compounded the difficulty in getting departments to talk to each other.

### 2.3 Assessment policy

Extensive analysis of data gathered had found that since the introduction of the diploma programme that students were increasingly acquiring the skills specified in the national curriculum framework. However, the system did demand a consistency in teachers’ recording; but under routine classroom conditions, this seemed difficult to maintain. One teacher explained, “We have to do lots of assessment that’s not subject related.”

Consistency was required not only in the observation, recording and evaluation of the assessment of these skills but also in the consequences for those students who did not achieve the required level. The impact of having students, who were let through the system, share their experience in the playground on the motivation and faith in the system of others coming through the class levels below them would undoubtedly be negative in the long term.

Student progress in all their subjects was monitored twice a year to check on the development of their essential skills. Information was also collected, analysed and reported for the following: numeracy and literacy achievement; graduation rates for each Year level; Māori achievement; and examination, scholarship and qualification success. ERO (2002) commented that “some departments need to make sure that students were also gaining the [subject] knowledge they need to learn successfully.”

The school also monitored: student participation, being prepared, work completion, respect for others, attendance, and punctuality using data taken from individual student reports. Staff workload saw reporting on student progress drop from three times to twice a year during 2000. These reports have been completed electronically since 1999 with continued training sessions and ongoing assistance for those staff who required it. Staff also collected extensive data on the performance indicators of the strategic plan at all levels.

Staff morale was another focus for 2002 data collection with a survey having been conducted on staff satisfaction. Exit interviews and surveys on systems and processes, leadership, and team involvement had already been established.
In terms of collection of data, this was not as efficient as they would like because they were still learning their way in terms of the design and use of systems. It was recognised that data collection needed to get back to inform practice in the classroom and they were working on that. The staff agreed that having the data made a huge difference in terms of decision-making. Reportedly it had transformed the school and had created a level of stability in the school that was “quite amazing.” As one staff member explained, “What it means was that instead of having debates on what was the issue, we were acknowledging we have an issue and then the debate begins on how do we make a difference?”

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

*Example: Science*

Science department teachers remember the implementation of the new national curriculum statement as being reasonably straightforward. They went through the document using a cut and paste exercise and stuck the sections of paper on large sheets. The more experienced teachers, those with a stronger background and familiarity with the content area, led this exercise. Then staff proceeded to look at the choice of activity and resources. Coverage was the main issue as the content was well established and familiar to staff. Teachers believed that the main impact of the new curriculum documents was to refocus them on achievement objectives and review their assessment. The head of science felt that his staff were more confident about what they knew regarding student achievement now and “better at saying what students can and can’t do.” He believed that the new document focused staff on the learning process rather than the test.

The HOD saw a major gap in the area of appropriate professional development options. Although departments could apply for time from the PD budget, there were actually few courses that were considered appropriate for teachers to attend. In science, there was an absence of curriculum-based courses. Conferences were seen to be useful but the time and cost commitment involved was prohibitive.

This head of department believed that as the national curriculum documents were not prescriptive, it was easy to slip back into straightforward content areas such as physics. He would like to see more prescription in concepts to be taught, such as a list of equations for physics or a list of gene interactions that the students needed to know, set out in the curriculum statement. However, he was not looking for a more definitive guide as he believed it was the role of staff and schools to prepare their students for further study in the subject area through selecting local examples to illustrate the concepts. He explained, “You can look to textbooks for guidance but these were someone else’s interpretation and commercially orientated.” It was suggested that a help-desk be provided through phone and e-mail for teachers and heads of department to access support with curriculum changes and implementation.

There was no current scheme for this subject area. It was explained to me that the scheme would simply be a collection of all the unit plans so a scheme was, therefore, unnecessary. Staff in the content areas (chemistry, biology, physics) were delegated responsibility for the development and the review of course material and writing of new units. The department reviewed the courses annually and had recently “beefed” up chemistry. Each year, students
did two chemistry, two biology, two physics topics, and an Earth science topic. Unit plans were produced to a certain format and there was an expectation that staff would teach to them. Each topic lasted for three weeks (12 contact hours). The students had individual booklets for each unit and each lesson contained the sections, for “What I need to know,” “Read this info,” “The activity/experiment,” and written requirements and extension. This researcher found it difficult to see the connections between the national curriculum documents and the unit plans. The activities and objectives were outlined clearly to students so they were sure of teacher expectations but the wording and format of the objectives did not coincide with that within the national curriculum document. I was told that the links to the document were clear in the planning and design stage and that the national curriculum documents were used during course reviews but these links were not clear in the current documents and the use of terms or activities. The overall emphasis on skills with literacy and numeracy and reading and writing appeared to be the focus of class activities. The units were designed to provide as much support as possible to new staff or relievers; they were designed as essentially “pick up and go” documents. This department used common tests and set marking schedules. There were no hidden hurdles for students and practices for internal assessment were provided.

New staff participated in an induction programme and had a mentor in the subject area.

*Example: The lesson*

The lesson for this Year 10 class began with the teacher going through what the students should have completed in their booklets in order to study for the upcoming test on “weather and space.” This was the final session prior to the test. He also collected a homework task.

One of the student “need-to-knows” for this unit was “how to graph data.” The main focus for this day was on graphing. The graphs were about rainfall. The students had a specially designed activity sheet and all the work could be completed on this sheet. There was also a resource sheet with six examples of student graphs on it. This class was asked to complete the task individually but it was made clear that they could work with friends, which they did. The set task involved making a judgment on the quality of each of the example graphs, the two best, two worst, and two in the middle. Then going through, examining each graph for the mistakes the students had made. From this list of mistakes, students were to devise a marking scheme followed by marking each of the six example graphs according to their criteria and then comparing their initial judgment with their rankings of the “now marked” examples. The final part of the lesson required each student to prepare their own rainfall graph using the data provided and then to mark their work using the marking scheme they had developed.

The teacher reviewed progress and answered questions, and discussed the upcoming test with the class. The class also discussed a successful school sports team’s recent win. At one point the teacher drew out the points important for graphing such as having a clear title, naming the axis, and using regular scales. The students seemed ready and confident with their responses. The teacher didn’t record anything. It didn’t take long for members of the class to be at different points in the required activity sequence. The students were settled in their groups. Some had paper and pens and others borrowed from those who did. There was a high degree of individual responsibility given to students by this teacher for their time management, task completion, and maintenance of work records. The teacher didn’t check up on individuals, although he did speak casually to one student about maintaining
respect for others. The climate set by the teacher was of individuals being “here to do their job.” He was relaxed and showed respect for students throughout. The majority of students seemed to find this a comfortable environment and understood their “job.”

The teacher explained that it was wise to collect in the student’s booklets so that they didn’t get lost or damaged; however, students needed to take them home to complete work and to study for tests. He felt collecting in workbooks disadvantaged those students interested in revising their work independently or doing further investigation into the topic.

Time warnings were given for the end of the period and instructions on what to hand in; the resource sheets, for example, were collected and brought to the front. The teacher spoke to a couple of students on their way out.

Example: Technology

The head of technology acknowledged that although things were far from satisfactory in the technology department regarding the provision of the national curriculum, this was not a current issue for staff or the school. The preparation and implementation of NCEA was dominant in people’s thoughts. He explained that the technology curriculum was a new way of learning a new process of learning rather than looking at the end result, and that the curriculum framework demanded the removal of traditional boundaries within schools. In this school, food technology - still called home economics - was separate and had closer ties with the PE department. Between home economics and PE there were six hours of contact time with students at Year 9 (three periods for PE, two for self-esteem and one for home economics). Co-ordination was also difficult among the subject areas under the heading of the technology curriculum due to the separate location of these areas on the school grounds. The food and textiles area was well advanced in the writing of its class level and unit plans according to the format of vocabulary and objectives used in the curriculum documents.

Because of the increase in the number of courses to be covered according to the curriculum and the significant cuts in programme hours, there was concern that at Year 11 the students would not have had adequate preparation in terms of skills. Teaching all the strands did not give enough time to actually teach the practical skills that the students needed. Essentially this HOD believed that a three-year course (Years 9, 10 and 11) was being attempted in one year, that is, Year 11.

Assessment in technology covered both subject-specific objectives and student responsibilities. Skills and safety, for example, technological knowledge and understanding of materials and personal safety, skills in the use of hand tools, and the design and quality of finish and safety was assessed through teacher observation, project assessment, review of student paperwork, and student self-evaluations. It was acknowledged that decisions about the levels at which students were at were not being made. The HOD felt that staff did not have enough knowledge or enough training to be able to determine students’ levels of achievement and the question of “comparing with whom” was an issue. Students at this school were characterised as having poor literacy skills and not doing homework. Attendance, lateness and general discipline were seen by this department as ongoing issues. They also felt a lack of support through inconsistencies of approach. One example cited was of a student who had threatened a staff member. After he received some counselling for this, the student was back in class the very next scheduled period.
In the materials-technology area, students were expected to complete projects and to complete a project that worked. This, along with written communication limitations and low levels of homework completion, put a constraint on the coverage of the technology objectives that required students to do research. This teacher arranged that the students would complete reflection exercises, set or design plans and evaluation forms for each project. Self-evaluation, understanding of general safety, workshop safety, machine safety and technology, and hand tools and materials capability were all key aspects of the technology programme at this school. Although the experimentation and exploration of materials and problem-solving was desired, the time involved and the potential costs of material wastage, ruined projects and students’ sense of failure meant that this department had not found the proper balance to resolve this issue.

The principal believed the technology document would continue to be a struggle for staff and schools because although it was “a good idea, it was not informed well and doesn’t work well.”

Example: The lesson

The teacher let in the Year 9 students and they collected their folders on the way to their seats. Inside the folder the students had instruction sheets for each project, worksheets on safety and tool handling and self-assessment sheets. At the start of this lesson the students had time to update their folders which allowed the teacher to record attendance and speak to those who came in late. As with the science class, a lot of the written material was provided for the students with specifically designed booklets. Students only needed to fill in their names, the bullet point lines, make short comments, tick a box or write in a grade and a mark. Everything the students needed to know was generally provided on a printed sheet. This did not mean the students had a lot of worksheets in their folders, most folders I saw only had the current worksheets (but there were exceptions).

Today’s lesson in materials technology was their final class on the “key hook” project. This project was the third wood project these students had tackled. The students had a design to copy and the purpose of the exercise was to practise accuracy (length, square corners, hole positioning); skills (assembly techniques and hand tool operations); and finish (smoothness, sanded surface finish). The students collected their incomplete projects and the tools they needed and worked steadily. The teacher went over each stage in the process as someone was ready for it, gathering the students around for a few minutes at a time and going over the purpose, outcomes, cautions and standards at each point. There was usually enough equipment but some students took turns with their friends. One completed the corners for all the people on his table as they talked. As this was the last session on this project and time had moved on, there were a few shortcuts taken. Sanding was cut short and boards were oiled rather than vanished, a template was used for positioning the hooks rather than the students completing the measuring themselves. Areas were set aside for different operations in the process and small informal production lines developed, such as the boy shaping the corners for his friends and another student who oiled a series of boards while he was set up and wearing the protective gear.

As the end of the session approached, the time pressure could have seen things become chaotic; certainly, the teacher was very busy trying to assist individuals and keep an eye on what was happening throughout the room. However, the students knew the routines of
cleaning up, were familiar with standards and expectations and there was no rushing about evident.

It was interesting to me, and I took it as a sign of the respect and acceptance that students and teachers showed for each other, that one student was wearing a fluffy top that readily collected sawdust but no one made any comment and the student herself was unconcerned.

The students only had a little time to complete their lesson self-evaluation at the end of this class. The students would routinely complete a self-evaluation sheet at the end of each lesson and each project, looking at their punctuality, being prepared, respect for others, work completion and participation. The projects would be evaluated for functionality, appearance, plus any solutions and modifications to improve the process or the product if the exercise was repeated. Folders were handed in at the end of every session and the teacher would count them off to make sure. Around the room the equipment was stored in coloured areas so that the teacher could see at a glance if any item had not been returned.

The teacher explained that he liked to conclude every class with a few minutes of quiet time so that students could settle and reflect on their work and behaviour for that session. Also during this time he could check on equipment and clean-up procedures before the students were released to their next class.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This large school had high expectations of its students. It had a clear vision and catered for a diversity of students, including a large number of adults. A large senior management team met regularly. A school curriculum co-ordinator was responsible for school-wide leadership. The curriculum framework document was regarded as the basis of the central direction for curriculum in the schools. A lot of work had been done in the school to develop departmental (subject) strategies. In one case, units had been planned but no departmental scheme was thought necessary. Assessment change was major, with consequent effects on reporting.

There was considerable devolved responsibility, which raised challenges of consistency across departments. Professional development was considered important.

5.0 Summary

- This school was based upon a system of devolved responsibility related to a school strategic plan. A senior management group of 13 portfolio area directors and a principal’s group were key management features.
- The essential skills of the national curriculum framework were central to developing departmental schemes of work.
- The school had a Diploma of Learning for Year 9 and 10 students.
- There were still concerns for some teachers about where their subject fitted with the new national curriculum, for example, home economics, accounting, and economics.
- There were assessment systems across the school that teachers were still coming to grips with.
- Science and technology were used as case studies of curriculum implementation.
1.0 Description

This modern co-educational school was well resourced. Although currently a decile 9 school, the demographics of the local area were changing and the school was expecting the decile rating to go down in future. There were a number of specialist rooms for science, computing, graphics, workshop, food and nutrition technologies, drama rooms and an auditorium. In addition, the school had an independent living and physical assistance unit, a whanau unit, and a child care centre. Remedial and extension programmes were available for students where the need arose. However, with over 1300 students, there was an ongoing struggle for space. The school had a large school zone and a waiting list, an enrolment scheme having been in place for a number of years.

The school prospectus stated that the aim was for students to discover satisfaction from achievement as well-rounded young people. Students would, therefore, not be involved in fundraising such as galas, raffles, and mystery envelopes. The prospectus stated that the school’s success was measured by the large numbers of students involved in clubs and team activities for learning, competition, attainment, and for fun. However, the school had a clear academic focus and was exam-orientated. Good retention rates in senior classes supported specialist teaching at this level and students were encouraged to achieve excellence. The school’s students enjoyed high pass rates at National Certificate level and the school had a close relationship with a nearby university. Students who were more able had the opportunity to commence study in some university subjects in their final year at the school and were encouraged to continue their studies at university.

The school and its teaching staff took a life-long interest in their pupils and shared pride in the achievement of past as well as present pupils through a newsletter and a school website. The principal considered that the best outcome for each student was that they leave school with the appropriate (as commensurate with their abilities) documents and qualifications to advance into their chosen field. The principal explained that the “kids and their marks are paramount. There should be no mistake that academic things such as exams are paramount and sacrosanct.” The staff analysed student examination results “to death” interpreting and sharing the findings at all levels and comparing the student’s performance to the external standards of national benchmarks.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The school had a stable staff with just minor turnover among the total staff population of more than 160 staff overall and more than 90 teaching staff. Staff at the school were described by the principal as “experienced, dedicated professionals” who had generally been employed at the school over a long period. These teachers had strong subject association involvement and were often national examiners or markers.

Departments set their own goals for innovation, implementation of new technology and new resources. Each Department was able to independently determine the “what” and “how” of the teaching and learning in their areas. Departments regularly reviewed courses according to a five-year plan using analysis of assessment and evaluation data, along with student needs and expectations. Courses were modified or new courses introduced with the
aim to continue to ensure the maintenance and growth of the school’s academic success and reputation. This ongoing evaluation regularly called for a review of the big picture, the development of new courses and expansion of current teaching space. The introduction of new courses put a strain on already inadequate facilities and the school was undergoing desperately needed changes. As the principal made it clear, “the goal is the student having the best piece of paper they are able to have when they leave school.” There was less concern with the details of how they would get there but high interest in the students’ achievement results.

The principal stayed informed about what was happening in the school through meetings with the senior staff (weekly) and the Board of Studies (monthly). This board was made up of the principal, the committee chairpersons (curriculum, resource, professional development and assessment), the 10 faculty co-ordinators (English, languages, mathematics, social science, science, business and information technology, the arts, technology, health and physical well-being, and learning support services) and a representative from the student support area (deans, counsellors and careers). The heads of faculty had a say in professional development decisions, chaired their area meetings and reported back to the Board of Studies but the extent to which the position had an administrative title or one of leadership varied from faculty to faculty. The school had designed the faculty meeting structure so that staff whose subject areas crossed curriculum divides could attend more than one area meeting. It was not clear how many staff this would affect or how many would take advantage of this. The principal described the management style in the school as democratic through participation and decision-making on committees and the Board of Studies. The board was for keeping everyone informed, operating collectively, and primarily rubber-stamping those proposals put to it. Sometimes proposals were sent back for further information. Staff were encouraged to participate in the process and there were a number of formalised procedures and forms for making their opinions heard, the principal having the power to veto decisions made by the Board of Studies but had done this only once.

The principal described the culture in the school as “open door, supportive, co-operative, collective, and always mindful of doing what is best for the kids and the community.” Attempts were made to value everyone’s opinions equally including, in his words, “teachers, cleaners, and senior management,” and to be fastidious about mutual respect across the whole school.

The principal explained that the NEGs and NAGs were largely self-evident and common sense for education professionals. There was a copy of them on the wall in the office and the principal said the school as a whole and staff would “always try to do such things.” The NEGs and NAGs were “embedded in the school charter, the strategic plan, the policies, and in what you do.” Reporting had been shaped to report on the NEG and NAG items in order but otherwise the principal thought that things were the same as always.

Documentation was formalised at all levels. Documents were used by everyone to continue established routines of communication, management and decision-making. The standardised forms, reports and policies were reviewed regularly and modified to be more manageable and meaningful.
3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

This principal had three concerns with regard to implementation of the national curriculum; these were:

- Where are the facilities, the number of classrooms?
- Where are the resources, the training, the professional development, and the supplementary materials?
- How do you fit it into the day, what gives way to allow this to occur?

The principal believed that an ongoing issue for schools was timetabling, how to fit the curriculum into the day and how the school determined subject priorities. It was explained that the curriculum documents had been developed independently of each other and therefore, by nature, each was territorial. This made timetabling hard for schools. The school’s solution for 2002 was a six-period day but this would be reviewed, as the bell times and altering routines for different days of the week were confusing for staff and students. At the time of interview, the six-period day solution was chosen as the best of the possible scenarios so that traditional or core curriculum areas did not give up any time to accommodate the new learning areas. The school was considering moving to equal time for all learning areas in the junior programme, however, compulsory numeracy and literacy at level 1 meant English and mathematics would remain core subjects. The principal was reluctant to take time away from “fundamental areas including mathematics and English for the untried and unproven new curriculum areas.”

The curriculum committee chair agreed with the principal in that not having the facilities (classrooms and resources) to handle new courses was a key barrier to successful curriculum implementation. In the curriculum chairperson’s opinion, the implementation of the national curriculum signalled some significant changes. These changes included new curriculum areas such as dance and technology. The chairperson explained that the national curriculum required teachers to look differently at the learning areas. “The implementation of the curriculum has called for us to look differently at learning areas, some people still talk about ‘core subjects,’ a term that needs to disappear.”

However, giving equal time to the wide range of choices students had in Years 9 and 10 could also have a negative impact as the curriculum chairperson could see that students were starting to specialise earlier as the curriculum got more “bitsy.” The principal believed that the national curriculum did not cater well for the more able students who “find large chunks of the curriculum ho-hum and boring, slow and pedantic.”

The curriculum chairperson identified three factors that supported successful implementation of new curriculum. They were:

- a positive school culture;
- expertise and experience;
- and leadership.

It was seen as important for the school to have a clear and widely understood strategic direction. The experience of the school with past changes - and the strength of teachers’
curriculum knowledge, knowledge of the student population, knowledge of the way the school worked, and of the relevant assessment and qualifications plus the stability of staff employment - all contributed to a positive school culture and the willingness and enthusiasm of staff.

Expertise and experience was also an element in the quality of leadership at the department level. Leadership provided by the heads of department was identified as a key factor in the successful implementation of curriculum statements. The curriculum chairperson explained that communication within a department, staff having the sense of being included and yet working to each person’s strengths was seen as very important to a department’s effectiveness at implementing change. This person concluded, “In short, good staff relations means good school culture and good [curriculum] implementation.”

Although all staff interviewed went off track into NZQA and NCEA discussions, and they expressed differing views on the value and use of the curriculum documents, they were consistent in their views that the ongoing issues were subject overload, classroom space, and government support. The various subject areas within the school had vastly different experiences of implementation of the new curriculum documents. Departments varied in planning procedures, leadership style and the degree of independence and support staff felt that they had. All teachers were less concerned with accountability to official channels such as ERO and the Ministry of Education and were more concerned with the school’s reputation in the community.

The principal believed that schools were market-driven by their customers who were the students and the communities in which they lived:

*We are not doing something because the MOE says, “There are many choices in town and I encourage people to make those choices.” We are not the best [school] for all students. If there were only one system then we would all be doing it. The more prescriptive from above, the harder it is. Give us frameworks, “yes,” but the government is being increasingly prescriptive and good teachers feel it.*

He lamented that the responsibility for success with the new curriculum documents had been passed over to the schools, without the time to deliver, the facilities to deliver and the resources to deliver. Accountability had passed to the schools alone without there being debate on whether philosophically this was best for New Zealand students. The curriculum chairperson concluded by saying, “I would say we have conditional support for the national curriculum.”

**Example: Technology**

Technology was seen as an example of the full range of courses and options available in this school. The technology area had subject choices for: food technology, graphics, ICT, information management, materials, wood, metal, textiles, and motor and electronics technology.

However, the principal, curriculum chairperson, and staff in the technology department agreed that this school had been slow in implementing the technology curriculum initially because there was a huge debate about how to do so. The Year 9 programme was designed by having a teacher from each subject area write down which aspects of the curriculum
could be covered in their area of study, following which staff got together and took out the items that were clearly the same. Courses currently ran as four term courses or two half-year courses. However, the timing of courses required further programme modification as in the first term, swimming and athletics cut into contact hours, and in the fourth term examinations and prize-giving practices took precedence. There were also issues of gender imbalances and of meeting student choice. Integrated units required collaboration regarding timetabling of staff and suitable room allocations. These issues and the issue of student supervision had arisen when integrated units were attempted.

This school recruited staff for the ICT area and appointed a new head of department for technology. The new head of department for technology was connected to several professional bodies such as Home Economics and Technology Teachers’ Association New Zealand (HETTANZ); Technology Education New Zealand (TENZ); and The Royal Society; and was a technology co-ordinator involved in the technology trials. She was also involved in technology curriculum development. However, she had a different angle on the direction of the department to the person who was head of department before her. The different viewpoints and different abilities of (technology) facilitators were seen as a negative for the implementation of this subject. In addition, the grouping of subject teachers together under the seven learning areas of the national curriculum was significant when they may not have worked together before. This was particularly relevant for technology subject teachers.

For students, the main barrier was seen as the courses having largely lost their practical components. In the principal’s opinion, “It is sad really as those subjects were meeting a need.” Senior management staff believed that the teachers themselves might be also grappling with the theory component of the new technology curriculum.

The technology curriculum programme continued to be modified and adapted along with an ongoing desire to be more coherent in planning and reporting across the relevant areas. Teachers in technology were required to assess one objective from each of the three strands in each unit and supposedly, not the same objective each time. Although the HOD had access to the reports, she did not attempt any overview and said there was resistance to her initiating changes as staff within their areas preferred to “do their own thing.” The report form at Year 10 had a space for comments under “Technology Knowledge, Capability and Society.” The amount of information students and their parents gained from the completed forms was hard to determine. The HOD expressed concern but was doubtful she could initiate any improvements as staff largely operated independently. She was pleased to see that they were at least using similar formats. A key issue for technology at this school at the time of this study was that the umbrella label no longer seemed to fit comfortably or practically with faculty arrangements compared with how it was prior to the technology curriculum’s introduction.

As the HOD explained, the technology programme had no biotechnology or electronics components. Biotechnology came between horticulture and science. Electronics came under science at this school. Computing had developed their own programme without referring to any curriculum documents and that subject came under business studies. Wood, metal, textile and food technologies came under technology. The food technology programme was half food and half nutrition from the health and PE curriculum. The textiles programme was a mixture of the old home economics content plus design
technology. Looking more broadly, technology activities were also being carried out in Māori, some language and drama coming under the arts curriculum.

Technology was compulsory in Year 9 for three periods a week and the programme at this level gave students a taste of the technology subjects this school offered. At Year 10, students had a choice of options: one technology option or drama, one language option or art, and one other. From this programme, staff found it difficult to ensure students had an adequate knowledge base for any of the technology subjects at Year 11. The HOD at this school agreed with the curriculum chairperson that the “option” solution to timetable constraints gave some subjects “second best” status and subjects like technology were competing with the arts, health and PE, and other subject areas “in the same boat.” This HOD agreed with the principal that the NZ CEA had reinforced the concept of “core subjects” and being of the same opinion as the curriculum chairperson did not consider this to be positive or productive.

Example: The lesson

The room was specially built with a large lockable storage area at one end that contained equipment and ingredients. The room appeared clean and sterile, having been recently renovated. A mirror was positioned above the demonstration area. The noise level was difficult to control as the students sat where they wished and the room was large. There were 16 students in this lesson as 10 others officially on the roll were sitting “catch-up” examinations.

The lesson on this day was a sequel to a factory visit. The lesson began with the roll and notices. The students were asked to brainstorm in their seating groups what they saw on their factory visit. The groups could not tell me why they were doing this or what would happen next. Some groups focused on the particular part of the process they saw (for example, moulding, tasting, packaging, ingredients) and some focused on exactly what they saw (for example, machines, coco beans, butter). The groups reported on their lists and these were put up on the whiteboard. Then the teacher talked through the process with the class and numbered group contributions in order and then discussed other items to tie them in with the process. The hand-outs listed 11 parts of the process and students were asked to complete a flow chart, to list food hygiene practices and safety controls evident, and methods of wrapping. The last two questions on the handout focused on developing a new product and how this factory encouraged consumers to purchase their products. The point was in the title of the handout, “Production and Process Technology” and the main exercise was focusing on a flow chart of the process. However, it was not obvious to the students and some clearly were keen to get on to “making something.” Most students had come prepared with some ingredients. The teacher circulated to ask questions in an attempt to focus individuals on the correct steps as the students worked on their flowcharts. The common pattern was for one or two at each table to complete the chart and the others to copy from them. Students carried on social conversations throughout and some were writing letters. Those who completed the task seemed happy to share what they had done and those who copied paid no particular attention to checking whether the work was correct before copying it.

The second part of the lesson involved making truffles. The ingredients list and quantities were listed on the board. The task was made clear on the board with steps highlighted including identifying which person would be responsible for what. The students proceeded
to their work areas confidently and followed routines of hand-washing and aprons generally without reminders. A few were reminded about aprons by their peers. The teacher attended to ingredients issues, such as overseeing distribution and making items available to those who had not come prepared. The teacher paid attention to correct groups and individuals, looking for quiet, on-task behaviour and walking in the classroom.

The most common answer to the question, “What was being learnt or practised?” was not to overcook the chocolate (students were melting chocolate in the microwave as part of the task). Other answers were about rolling chocolate with a spoon and using the equipment. When the students came to coating their truffles most did not remember the instructions, nor did they refer to the board with interesting results. Most groups were washing up as they went. Cellophane and raffia packaging was available along with stars and hearts for tags if the students wanted to wrap their truffles as gifts. The homework task was to identify the “inputs” (ingredients, human tasks and equipment) and the “outputs” (products, waste, and other). Following this, they had to complete a sheet on health and safety practices looking at worker, workspace, equipment, storage and quality control in the product. The students had booklets for recording information on each food technology unit to keep the material together and for marking and test preparation.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This was a large, effective co-educational secondary school. There was a school-wide curriculum committee and the chairperson was part of the senior management team. A commitment to literacy and numeracy was evident for students Years 9 and 10, alongside other areas. A lot of effort had been expended incorporating new ideas such as technology and dance. Technology was noted particularly as traditional practices were hard to change and the HOD faced problems getting teachers to use common formats for assessment and planning. There were ongoing issues over subjects and their place: core versus option, and how to fit competing demands into a timetable schedule. Those issues were yet to be resolved.

Despite these matters, this was a school with high expectations of its students, a secondary school that placed prime importance upon academic achievement.

5.0 Summary

- This was a modern high decile, well resourced school.
- There was a very stable, experienced teaching staff.
- Departments were given considerable autonomy in how curriculum was planned and implemented, but were formed into few faculties. A Board of Studies met monthly.
- Documentation was formalised at all levels and reviewed and revised regularly.
- A curriculum committee addressed issues of scheduling and decisions about curriculum offerings and delivery.
- Departments varied considerably in leadership and planning procedures.
- Technology curriculum was used as an example, and revealed a lot of issues to do with how to incorporate practices prior to the new technology curriculum statement into the statement’s implementation.
A1: An area school

1.0 Description

As an area school, students were able to attend from Year 0 through to Year 13. The student population of 543 was made up of 70% Pakeha; 27% Māori; and 3% Other (2002 figures) with a gender composition of 53% boys and 47% girls. There were also a number of foreign fee-paying students. Students attending this school came locally from the small town in which the school was located and the surrounding rural areas. This decile 5 school was constructed completely of relocatable buildings joined by covered walkways and enjoyed extensive and well used play areas and sports fields. There were two science laboratories, two technology laboratories and specialist graphics, drama, and home science rooms. The school was family-orientated and provided a focus for community activities.

The new principal took up the position in late 2001, inheriting, as he saw it, three schools divided around Years 0-6, 7-10 and 11-13. The principal and the senior staff expressed a belief “in the good sense of looking at the school as a whole” and considered an area school to be a unique organisation with the opportunity for seamless learning and good communication between the levels. However, this was not always the case.

The 35 teachers at this school were committed and loyal to the school. They were enthusiastic about the opportunities the school provided for their students. A significant number of staff were married couples and quite a number of the staff had been at the school since it opened just under 20 years ago. Six teachers had recently improved their qualifications, completing their degrees or gaining a Master’s degree. Four teacher trainees in the area who were undertaking their study online based themselves at the school for their practical experience. The latest ERO report (2002) stated that “relationships between teachers and students are positive and productive,” and “the quality of teaching is generally of a high standard.” The staff could see clear benefits for their students in having all their schooling in one positive environment, allowing the unique experience of maturing in a supportive and familiar learning community. A key strength of the school was in its swimming and surfing programmes. Both staff and students demonstrated independence and flexibility.

Two ongoing issues for this school were inconsistent student attendance and clashes in timetabling, both of which had been dealt with in recent years. The former, that of inconsistent student attendance, was dealt with by instituting a Diploma of Learning for Years 9 and 10 with credits awarded for student achievement in their subject areas and in their personal and work skills including attendance. Each day of unexplained absence cost the student two credits. The first year this penalty was introduced, there was reportedly quite a shock for both students and their families but now the students were saying to parents and caregivers, “No, I don’t want to go shopping in the city as I lose two credits.” Attendance across the board had improved.

The second issue, timetabling, was aided by allowing senior students to devise their own timetables. This meant some subject areas like art would have senior students coming to work in the back of the room most of the day on their own or in small groups.
The principal described the community as “very interesting.” He said they had a full range of socio-economic family backgrounds. A sense of “the grass being greener on the other side” was purported to operate in their 20% student turnover each year but the principal said he believed all schools suffered from that. He cited the return of many students who had tried other schools as a sign that there was a reversal operating also. The Māori community was having greater input as this had been actively sought with more Māori parents attending school and class events. There was also a strong Kapa Haka group at this school.

2.0 School systems

2.1 Management structure: Curriculum

The school had three syndicates in the junior area, Years 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6 with syndicate leaders and an overall junior director who was also an assistant principal (AP). There were heads of department at Years 7-10 and an AP in charge of Years 11-13.

Every morning there was a short staff meeting. The senior management team consisted of two staff from Years 0-6, one from Years 7-8, and one from Years 9-10 and 11-13, plus the DP and principal. This team met once a week. There was also a senior management group, which met twice a term. This was a group similar to the senior management team but it included three more female staff by adding two syndicate leaders at Years 0-6 and the art teacher for Years 7-13. This group undertook major specific tasks and at the time of interview, they were working on reviewing and rewriting the staff manual.

The principal believed that the first step in successful change was to identify strengths as a basis for change, then have a small group of key people “work hard on an identified need.” The success of this group would draw in others and pick up the weaker but willing staff as they went. In the principal’s view, those staff against change ended up leaving and being replaced by “like thinkers.” In this school new developments used the existing system of committees. These committees had six to eight people who met two or three times per term and had additional meetings as necessary. The committees were largely self-directed allowing individuals to practise their leadership skills with a clear goal or objective set by the principal. When the new principal arrived at the school, new committees were formed with specific objectives. The principal commented that this structure drew attention to the possibilities for action, and highlighted individual leadership and group strengths. It was intended that these committees would operate for a time, maybe one to three years according to their task.

2.2 Documents: School plans

Underneath the NAGs-based strategic plan, there was intended to be an annual plan with objectives, outcomes, budget, responsibilities, and completion dates. There was an annual plan for 2002 but at the time of the case study visit, there had not been any for 2003. The principal explained that the focus this year had turned to a new charter, a Ministry of Education requirement.

Much of the documentation that was available had been developed for the last ERO visit.

The principal used the curriculum documents to judge the effectiveness of teaching and learning at the school. He found this easier to do with the mathematics and science
curriculum documents as he explained he had a science background himself. The English document he found ambiguous; hence, he relied on data he received from his directors. While he often found teachers’ planning quite “impressive” he was still not entirely convinced that it matched what the curriculum documents required.

2.3 Assessment policy

There was a school-wide assessment programme. In 2002, this covered visual language, mathematics, and science. The junior area curriculum committee for each nominated subject area designed the assessment to be used and marked the completed samples according to levels. Most of the data collected went to the syndicate leader but if there was a concern, then the issue would be passed on to the junior director. Concerns about any individual were passed on to the appropriate director and the parents would be contacted.

The junior area had a system of data-gathering in place to assess, record and analyse student achievement. There were also procedures for following up the findings with support for individual students. The director emphasised several times that it was considered not only important to collect data so that they would know “where the kids are at,” but also “to do something with that information” to support students with needs.

In the principal’s opinion, the “most important thing teachers have to do is to monitor students’ work” so, for him, student workbooks became a key record. For the essential skills, from the principal’s perspective, he considered it most important that teachers were “aware of what these are and what they are there for.” Sometime in the next two years, he planned to gather information on coverage of the essential skills across the school in all learning areas but this was not an immediate priority.

Reporting times were different at different levels in the school:

- Years 0-6 had a parent evening in term one; a mid-year parent interview; and a formal report at the end of the year.
- Years 7-8 had a parent evening in term one; and a mid-year and an end-of-year report.
- Years 9-10 had reports each term for their Diploma of Learning; Years 11-13 had reports that coincided with their exam cycles, which occurred twice a year.

3.0 Implementing the national curriculum school-wide

3.1 School-wide schemes, plans and programmes

The principal believed that the curriculum at Years 0-6 was fairly cohesive and well monitored but that at Years 7-13 the curriculum was far more fragmented with obvious strengths (such as technology) and a number of weaknesses (not stated).

This school had conducted a survey on curriculum implementation prior to my arrival so that the senior staff I would speak to had some information to speak from. This was typical of the way the school operated, for example, teachers would collect the data and gather the
information the philosophy of “when you know what the story is” being when they would set upon taking some action.

In answer to a survey question asking teachers about any other factors that would have helped them to successfully implement the curriculum documents, the following were mentioned: more back up documents, more professional development contract time, and more adviser time. “Advisers” were advocated by the teachers so that teachers could have help in following up on the implementation of all the curriculum documents and be provided with more ongoing support. These teachers particularly appreciated the opportunity to hear more feedback from other teachers and they stressed ongoing cycles of professional development across all curriculum areas so that there were opportunities to fill any gaps in their knowledge.

It was also suggested that the ideal model for curriculum implementation was for all teachers to have a four-month professional development contract; however, the junior director believed that teachers who were over 30 years of age did not necessarily understand the philosophy of the new curriculum. He cited the mathematics curriculum as an example of this; instead of using a problem-solving approach, many teachers were still teaching the way they had always done. The junior director at this school believed that professional development needed to focus on the underpinning philosophy of the documents and the new teaching methods and approaches. There was a consensus at the school that the curriculum document model suited mathematics and science but that it certainly was not a good format for English and social studies. The teachers felt that some subjects were simply made to fit the model.

Leadership, guidance and support provided by individual teachers or curriculum committees was considered by staff to have helped greatly in implementing the national curriculum documents within their school.

Ongoing at this school was a cycle of curriculum review with a new cycle soon to be developed, to try and fit everything in. The difficulty, however, it was explained, in establishing systematic curriculum review was that other priorities arose. Bullying was a major focus one year; for another, there was staff professional development on assessment. These major development areas were seen to slow the curriculum review process. The new cycle under development was likely to have a six-seven year cycle to fit everything in.

The curriculum framework document was seen as “excellent,” and a brilliant founding document as a basis for the others. However, the junior director conceded that teachers had not had the time to digest it. The junior director also used NEMP documents, and explained how he went through these documents with a fine tooth comb for good news and concerns, activity ideas and assessment benchmarking.

At all levels staff expressed the opinion that as an area school, they should know what the next steps were for students going into the next class and what they had done as they came from their previous class. There was a desire expressed for greater communication and collaboration across the school - a seamless curriculum and improved knowledge of where students had come from and where they were going in their subjects. Individual staff also gave suggestions about which of their colleagues they needed to talk with to get the process
started and who they needed to meet with, and a system was organised for these meetings to take place.

3.2 Curriculum Areas

There were two curriculum areas reported on for this case study; health and physical education and social studies. There was no clearly established subject committee of members from across the school or single leader of any curriculum area school-wide. Leadership in curriculum tended to be in line with the three areas of the school, Years 0-6, Years 7-10 and Years 11-13. Two teachers in this school were interviewed for each area and two classes observed in an attempt to gather information about how curriculum programmes and implementation worked for these areas.

*Example one: Health and physical education*

The health and physical education programme was singled out by ERO (2002) as an example of the school’s success, through integration and co-operation, in its aim to deliver a seamless education in the essential learning areas. Everyone I talked to agreed that the staff at this school had had sound health and PE professional development through a Ministry of Education contract. Staff felt they had a good understanding of “where the document was coming from and what it is trying to achieve” (intent and aims).

A major concern for health and physical education staff was meeting the variety of student needs. The teachers at this school felt that the national curriculum document did not support teachers adequately in catering for the various levels of ability within classes. Managing the equipment with a range of teachers, class levels and topics operating concurrently were also ongoing issues.

*Health and physical education: Documentation*

There was a junior PE scheme for Years 0-6 and a separate health scheme for Years 0-6. For Year 9-10 students, there was a health scheme plus and a health and PE operational scheme for Years 7-10. The acting head of department for PE (Years 7-10) expressed confidence that their documentation reflected the intentions and aims of the national curriculum and that staff were “walking the talk.” The need, he felt, was to develop more monitoring to oversee both subject areas, that is, health and PE, across the school (Years 0-13). As with other staff in the school, the need for more regular meetings was mentioned to enable greater collaboration and co-ordination. For example, as head of department in PE, he recognised that the curriculum required links with the health teacher but the person who wrote the health scheme had left and so far, no meetings had been set up with the new teacher responsible for this area. It was acknowledged at a number of levels that the multi roles and responsibilities held by some staff - a natural consequence of being part of a small department in a small school - hindered progress in the review and development of documentation, programmes, assessment and reporting. The head of department for PE was a teacher with multiple roles and for him, this was a key issue. He explained that it would be better if the role of HOD covered both health and PE and was one of overseeing and monitoring, reflecting and evaluating to look again to see “the cracks where things have fallen down in the transfer from the old way to the new way.”

The health department scheme covered only Years 9-10, those two years being the focus for the HOD for health (Years 7-10).
PE planning at Year 7-10 level acted as a guide in coverage of objectives through class activities and discussion, and it allowed consistency between staff through the use of unit templates, year and term planners. Staff were involved in the review of these annually. The topics and objectives were visible on the gym wall for students at each level to see what would be the next focus and to understand what was expected of them in terms of learning outcomes.

The Year 0-6 teachers would all meet to track health and PE topics and to evaluate the effectiveness of their working documents, which included a year planner, term and week planners, and topic units. Junior unit plans had tick boxes for the underlying concepts, the strand, areas of learning and the essential skills. Underneath this, were noted the context, level and year followed by the strand and level, achievement objectives and learning outcomes, and assessment procedures and underlying concepts (again, for some). The teacher added the activity sequence under the heading “Experiences.” It was of concern to one lead teacher how little professional development some staff had had in this area and yet she felt that PE was one of the best curriculum areas in their school in terms of teacher confidence and knowledge of the national curriculum document and objectives.

*Health and physical education: Assessment*

Assessment in the senior school included benchmark standards that had been developed through teacher experience and modified as a result of their experience of student achievement. Examples included the time to complete a 200-metre swim and the set distance to throw a discus. Most teachers at all levels used a type of checklist recording sheet for assessment with other information such as the level noted along with the objectives and the student’s name. A code was used to mark each student’s degree of achievement of each learning outcome. Since the introduction of the new curriculum document, self-assessment had been used more to focus student attention on the learning objectives and to gather information relating to the essential skills. The self-assessment example shown to me for the junior aquatic unit asked the students to colour in a section of the fish picture that contained “I can” statements that they agreed with. This assessment was used pre and post the aquatic unit in term one.

*Health and physical education: Reporting*

The HOD felt that students’ reports did not reflect the curriculum document; these reports, however, were due for review before the students’ mid-year reports would next be completed.

The curriculum area review for PE in the senior area 2002 made the following points:

- The importance of the profile of the subject and the school being raised through reporting of events (such as camps) and achievements both in-school and through local publications;
- The importance of having a room set aside as a “home room” for PE and health with the appropriate ICT equipment;
- The ongoing issue of an inadequate budget for the subject and that the actioning of some decisions which had already been made was still to eventuate. It was unclear whose responsibility it was to carry out these decisions.
The health area completed its own curriculum reviews for which the objectives were to rewrite schemes so that they were more in line with specific levels in the curriculum statement and to develop a united seamless health curriculum throughout the school.

The junior school had a PE committee that met regularly consisting of three teachers, one teacher coming from each syndicate level. There was a curriculum team consisting of representatives from each syndicate at Years 0-6, and HOD PE Years 7-10, and HOD health Years 7-10. However, this group had not yet met at the time of interview. One of the syndicate representatives commented, “We should all see the follow-through. This is an area school, a classic place to have all staff on board and know what is happening.” The need for an individual staff member to have nominated responsibility for this area across the school was seen as vital, by both the health teacher for Years 9-10 and the HOD for PE and health Years 7-10.

The HOD thought the wider focus on physical development and student relationships of the new curriculum was very positive. His initial reaction was that the document was “a shocker” and that it was pedantic to force academic theory knowledge on this practical subject. However, he explained that he had changed his mind and believed the document had educated PE teachers “that there is more to life [this subject] than getting kids across the finish line.”

*Example: Lesson one*

A Year 10 class of 25 started the lesson in the gym. The students’ routine was to get changed and come to the gym, where, upon arrival, they fetched a basketball from storage and shot hoops while they waited. When the teacher whistled, students returned the balls and seated themselves on the bleachers. Those students not in PE uniform would get a “buckets” which required them to pick up rubbish one lunchtime under the direction of the teacher-on-duty. Following the teacher’s “settle down” comments came “the roll, and my introduction.” There were 21 students attending this day and two sitting out on the seats. The teacher reminded the students that the cross-country was coming up in three weeks, an announcement about which most students would have been aware. He explained how long the cross-country run would be. He went on to say that over the next three weeks they would build up to completing this distance comfortably, concurrently with the skills topic, large ball skills and volleyball. The run route would be started that day which, he expected, most students would complete in under six minutes. The students seemed very familiar with the route to be used.

Warm-up was six lengths of the hall which the teacher joined in on and then led stretches. He asked questions during the stretches to draw out not only the importance of stretching but also the muscles that were important to stretch in preparation for running. With a word the students moved into pairs on the mid-line of the court and played a tag game before moving outside. The teacher explained that they would be timed, citing the current records for boys and girls by name and said that he would like to see students complete the run without stopping. As each child crossed the line they were given their time. Near the end, the stopwatch was handed over to one of the girls and she completed the timing for those from five to six minutes while the teacher set up the volleyball poles with the help of those who had already completed their run.
When all had returned and were seated inside, the teacher gave instructions for inserting the pins to hold the poles firm and safe when putting up the nets. Everybody was instructed to help and work together. The students were given two minutes to complete this task. When the time was up, two nets out of four were fitted appropriately. Not everyone had contributed but there had also been some trouble with the equipment, the holes in the gym floor having filled up with dust over time and the screws to hold the poles firmly in place were not able to be fitted in all cases. This caused the teacher concern.

The lesson carried on with work in self-selected pairs, the emphasis being on co-operation at this point to practise the move “set.” Students were asked to repeat the move to see how many times they and their partner could connect without dropping the ball or sending it out of bounds. During this main body of the lesson, regular instructions were given with short activity periods as attention was given to refinement of particular skills. The teacher used encouragement across the class as he circulated, redirecting individuals promptly when necessary. The tasks in this section of the lesson were given with a short length of time to practise, then regrouping for further exploration and development of their skill at the “set,” “digging,” and “spiking.” The students were encouraged to support their partners, the distinction being made between the co-operation and competition sections of their activity. Students were given responsibilities in the decision of where the boundaries would be for their court and in monitoring the completion of the task in the time set. Techniques such at setting time periods for each minor activity, watching examples and then answering questions, repeating instructions and swapping partners were used to focus student attention.

There was a short time for a game with two in each team then the lesson concluded with the students back on the bleachers while the teacher explained an issue with the equipment and his commitment to get it sorted for next time and asking the students to review their individual commitment to the challenge of the tasks that had been set for the lesson and if they had tried their best. Those who had participated in the lesson then went off to get changed while those that had sat out put the gear away.

This volleyball lesson was the first in a series. The teacher explained (and it was clearly observable) that meeting the range of class learning needs while still managing the number of students in the class at this level was an ongoing challenge. The range within this class extended from two special needs students, both shy and unco-ordinated, to another student who was in national teams for two different sports. The teacher believed it was important to include some type of game in each session. The teacher was very familiar with the document strands and objectives and made easy reference to these as he explained the parts of his class programme. Units to be covered and their objectives were on the wall of the gym for each class level so that students could readily see what the activity was for the day or series of sessions and what the objectives of this activity were. The teacher’s expertise in volleyball was evident in the vocabulary he used and the skill development process he was working on with the class. There was a strong routine and ongoing commitment to the management of the class throughout.

Example: Lesson two

The second lesson was with a Year 5 and 6 class. The lesson began with the students seating themselves on the edge of a tennis court area in rows according to predetermined groups. The students remembered their groups and the teacher used positive comments to
two groups and to tidy up (line, posture) and be ready (quiet and attentive) to the other two. Relays were used as a warm up.

This lesson was part of a small ball unit that had begun the previous term. The skills being focused on were accuracy of passing and throwing, catching and fielding. One of the purposes of the station format of this session was that the teacher wanted the class to get used to working in groups outside and at stations so that she could work with and assess each group focusing on individual skill development. Using rotation around stations gave students greater participation in short bites at an activity that could be repeated over a period and this also suited when there was limited equipment and in managing student behaviours. There were four stations and on this day she had a student teacher help with the supervision of one other station. The teacher went around the groups asking students to reflect on what they were doing and what they were thinking about as they worked at the task. The students found this verbalising of the skills they were using quite difficult but the exercise was helping them focus and understand the skills objectives for that task. The teacher directed the stopping of the activity at each station, organising equipment and movement of the groups, and restarted each activity as the teams rotated around the four stations with instructions given for what the students needed to think about at each activity. The lesson concluded with the groups jogging back and being seated where they started from for a quick review of the lesson, the focus being on getting the students to think about the point of each exercise/task and what skill they were trying to improve. Then they formed an orderly line to return to class.

This teacher often used class time to review and evaluate the skills in discussion and then the students were given the opportunity to apply their skills in sports time on a Wednesday afternoon with such activities as diamond rounders which included teamwork and co-operative skills. This lesson was one of two periods per week. The class also had fitness for 10-15 minutes four days per week. The teacher explained that the patter tennis aspect of this small ball unit would increase as the unit progressed. This aspect of the unit was based on a TKI unit. This teacher planned on using the Internet to gather resources but accessing, locating and sifting and then modifying units all took time. Unit plans were ready reference and were open to modification according to varying student skill progression and the weather, which commonly required adjustments to the programme.

The junior teacher expressed the ideal assessment procedure as being “to sit down and record observations after the lesson or after school.” Checklists made recording easy but keeping these lists up-to-date was an ongoing process. Assessment could slip for those students who fell in the middle of the class according to ability and skill level.

For this teacher, the emphasis on “haora” was very important. A sense of worth and well-being, co-operation and teamwork was seen by this teacher as being not just important in health and PE or in class but all the time. The fostering of the desire to encourage, cooperate and help each other was the key focus for this teacher.

**Example two: Social studies**

The HOD (Years 7-10) came on board about the same time as the new curriculum document (the need for a new social studies scheme was seen as the catalyst for the previous HOD to retire). The social studies teachers got together to “nut it out.” They went on a Ministry of Education contract course which was for three or four days over the year.
Reportedly the message from facilitators kept changing each time these teachers met but this had settled down by the end of the course. The approach they used was based on the idea of putting together what they could and over time it would be improved and revision would be ongoing.

There was a social studies scheme of work for the junior area and a social studies scheme for Years 7-10. The senior document was compiled by the HOD for social studies. It was a relatively thin, well organised document where the aims etc. were referenced to specific NEGs, NAGs or sections of the curriculum statement. Guidance on effective planning and assessment were given as well as a year overview for Years 7-10, and a strand and objectives checklist for each topic at Years 7-8 and Years 9-10. The unit plan template (which teachers were given on disk) was also included and an example of a unit including self-assessment sheets and peer assessment sheets with the marking criteria clearly laid out. There was also the reporting sheet, the teacher evaluation sheet for the unit and a resource list included for other teachers to reference. At the end of this scheme, there was a curriculum budget and strategic plan with columns for NAG 1, current practice and action needed. The last pages covered curriculum goals for previous years and subsequent annual reviews.

Each year, staff would go through and review the social studies programme for appropriateness, teacher preference, and relevance to the school area and the school’s students. The report form used at this level identified the curriculum strand, the topic title, the student’s grade and the number of credits towards the Diploma of Learning. A big issue for this school was developing student work habits and attendance and teachers had 10 credits for each term to allocate for attendance.

The junior document was also relatively thin (although not as helpful, useful, clear or as organised as the senior document). This document contained policy statements, information on the strands, assessment and resources. A two-year framework of social studies topics was listed under the headings Social Organisation and Culture and Heritage. Although there was a place for achievement objectives on this framework they were not listed. A unit planner was included but it was different from the senior one. Note: I received five social studies unit plans from the junior area and all five were different from each other and from the plan template in the scheme. Extra assessment information was added at the end of the junior social studies scheme of work. A junior area goal for social studies was to create a seamless scheme for Years 0-10. There were some meetings about this in 2002. The teachers for Years 5-6 had set a two-year topic cycle, and Years 3-4 had made up their two-year cycle according to the strands and achievement objectives to ensure curriculum coverage but had not set the actual topics. The reasoning was that teachers could then take advantage of current events or visiting experts. The junior scheme did not reflect this and there had been nothing further done towards the goal of seamlessness that year. Long-term planning in the junior area was carried out at syndicate meetings. The plans depended on teacher interest and current events. There was enough flexibility in the scheme and long-term plan for individual teachers to make changes as they saw fit.

Across the board, teachers tended to bring speakers in to the classroom for their social studies topics rather than go on field trips or visits. They also used an increasing number of videos as this saved on costs and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) compliance. OSH regulations had made most of their traditional class trip destinations no longer viable. As a
greater range of videos were becoming available, the head of department was keeping a
close eye on their rationing to ensure student attention, and each one’s relevance to the
unit’s objectives.

The head of department commented on the lack of good resources especially for studies
relating to the Treaty of Waitangi. He explained that classes needed texts that “make this
subject interesting and pertinent to what kids are doing.” He stated, “You don’t need a set
of textbooks for all units as that would be boring and repetitive but for some units it can be
ideal if you find the right book.” This HOD used a single copy of any text with his classes
for a while (two to three years) to see if it would really provide value for money.

The head of department believed that the implementation of the new social studies
curriculum at Years 7 and 8 was more problematic than for Years 9 and 10 as the teachers
were not social studies teachers but generalist teachers and the allocation of time on class
timetables for social studies was being squeezed by attention to literacy and numeracy. He
also expected that teachers at this level, because they were teaching a whole range of
subjects, had less time to develop their units. As a HOD he was always trying to find
something to help and saw this as a key part of his job.

Reportedly, teachers had made such an effort at the time of introducing the new social
studies curriculum that there had been no call for specialised social studies professional
development since. Some in-house sessions had been conducted as part of staff meetings
but things had settled down in this subject area and ongoing development was initiated and
monitored at the senior level by the HOD.

The view from both the junior and senior ends of the school on the document was, “Do not
change it.” One staff member said, “It tells us what we need to teach but gives flexibility to
each teacher on how to teach this subject so in that way respects staff as professionals.”
However, more supporting documents would have been appreciated.

*Example: Lesson one*

This Year 0-1 class of 12 students started after the roll and fitness. The lesson started with
a review of previous topic discussions. The teacher asked the students, “What have we
been talking about?” The teacher used the students’ responses about warm clothes and
jackets to point out the photographs and captions on the wall that they had discussed
previously. She restated that they had talked about clothes for all seasons, clothes for
protection, clothes for special occasions, fancy dress clothes and uniforms as she pointed to
different photographs on the wall. All the time the teacher was reinforcing student
behaviour with attention to sitting up and putting their hands up if they have a response.
The most attention was reserved by the children for the dressing up conversation which had
been the focus of a lesson the day before. The teacher asked the students about costumes
that they might have at home.

Then the teacher turned the students’ attention to items of clothing she had placed in a row
on the floor, she asked the students to name the items and to say who would use each one.
The items included overalls, a life jacket, a hard hat, ear muffs, gardening gloves, a riding
helmet, skateboard protection and a wetsuit. This naming session moved fairly quickly and
opportunities were missed to introduce new vocabulary. For example, the hard hat and
riding helmet and bike helmet were all given the term “helmet.” The teacher then changed
the question format to, “You are on a boat, what protective clothing will you put on?” Then she chose a child and the child would select the appropriate item and put it on with the teacher’s assistance, if needed. Sometimes the question, “What would this item protect you from?” was also asked of the class.

Subsequently, the teacher compared the fire fighter’s boots with the pair of gumboots. The full set of fire fighter’s clothing was shown to the class, modelled by the teacher while drawing the student’s attention to reflective aspects and those for protection from fire.

The students were asked in the group to explain in a sentence what they had talked about today. Three boys took a turn to dictate a sentence to the teacher which she recorded on a strip of paper to go on the wall near the appropriate photograph. The teacher read these strips back and the child repeated as the teacher pointed, after which the class moved to their desks to do some writing of their own.

The students had a clear routine of books, pencils and word cards. They had made a prompt start and parents appeared at that time to help. The students were talking about the clothing, and the fire fighter’s items in particular. They were not using very much of the appropriate vocabulary, however, the concrete examples did seem to stimulate talking and then the writing of sentences. The students were free to write about the topic discussion of the day or about themselves.

The teacher explained that this was a *Culture and Heritage* topic called “The Clothes We Wear.” She thought that the class would focus in future lessons on fancy dress as this was where the students’ interest had been leading since the start of the unit. She said she often brought items or speakers into the classroom and was very happy with the impact of bringing in the fire fighter’s gear. She explained that lots of past units had run into difficulty with OSH and ACC regulations at traditional visiting places such as the bakery and the dairy factory. The owners of these businesses were no longer comfortable with student visits. She said that it was a shame as the social studies curriculum clearly advocated the use of community places to visit and that it would be more appropriate to judge the appropriateness of a visit on a case-by-case basis. She suggested that students of this age liked routines and rules to follow and the behaviour of her students on visits was not a problem.

At this syndicate level they had four social studies topics per year. Each topic lasted for a minimum of two weeks (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings). In this class, the Friday of the last week was kept for evaluation as this was also publication day for student writing.

For unit planning, this teacher modified found or shared units from internet sources and colleagues but sometimes she wrote her own. These plans were expected to ensure coverage of the objectives, clarification of what was going to happen and what the students were going to do and to give her guidance on progressive stages to follow to structure student learning. For units she wrote herself, this teacher tended to plan the initial idea but let the unit grow as students shaped it. She explained that it was a more complete unit when she finished the writing at the conclusion of the unit than at the beginning. The “grandparents” unit the previous term was reportedly very successful. It included a questionnaire home asking grandparents what they liked about living today and concluded
with a Grandparents Day at school. The teacher said that the class had enjoyed return visits by their grandparents to other events at the school such as the presentation of plays and this was seen as a direct result of Grandparents Day.

The students were usually assessed by individual interview with the teacher asking them questions and recording their answers. With a small class and the support of the junior director, who took the rest of the students during this time, she was able to undertake this form of assessment. The small class size also enabled her to seek answers from each child around the circle on many occasions and to listen to each child’s story every day. Students had a take-home folder that went home once per term with a sample in it from each subject.

The purpose of studying social studies, was explained by this junior teacher, was to develop “well rounded citizens who understand why we act the way we do and to understand others and difference, to understand that an individual is an important part of a larger group, part of a community and that there are other parts of community and society and the relationships.”

She saw the implementation of the social studies curriculum document as a channel between policy and what was appropriate for the children in her class, their interests and capabilities. Resource books, journals, the National Library, School library and the TKI site were cited as helpful for this purpose. Aspects that she would like to see that would support this process included the need for teachers to be shown how to teach as well as what to teach, New Zealand books to back up the curriculum, and more examples of units plans that could be adapted for her class. A shortcoming that this teacher noted about the curriculum documents generally was that they were only a “skeleton of ideas” and that you could not rely on any of them for guidance for special needs.

Example: Lesson two

Twenty-one Year 10 students and one teacher aide were lined up outside the classroom when we arrived. The teacher unlocked the door and the students found seats. Interestingly the boys all sat on one side of the room and the girls on the other expect for one boy on the girls’ side. The teacher initially dealt with the overheated room by opening the windows and turning on the fan. Then he used notes on the whiteboard to introduce students to the three parts of the day session. He spelt out what had to be completed during class and what could be homework if not finished. The word generalisation was focused on with the teacher asking students for definitions and examples. The exercise for this day involved the students using captions from a previous lesson where they matched captions to photographs. The students were instructed to date their page and then make two columns, one titled, “Work in New Zealand during The War (1939-1945),” and the other, “After The War.” The students were required to paste the captions in their appropriate columns.

The teacher circulated to hand out sheets, from which students would cut the captions, and he used questioning to check that students understood the instructions. The students sent friends for the scissors to get started and the roll was called. Some students cut out the captions, planned their spacing and location and then stuck them down. Others cut out, placed and stuck the captions singly one at a time. There were plenty of borders and shading being used by both boys and girls. Early in the exercise, the teacher used the board to review the captions’ placement in the appropriate columns.
The second part of the lesson required students to write two paragraphs containing generalised statements about the nature of work during the war and the nature of work after the war. The teacher asked the students to read carefully the captions in each column to formulate in their heads a generalisation, an overall statement on the nature of work during these two periods. Students were asked for suggestions and replies included, “changing times and changing roles,” “culture and working,” and “situations vacant” which was the overall title of their current unit. Soon the teacher read the captions out for each column to aid the thinking process as the students worked.

As part of the previous lesson in this unit these students had been asked to write similar paragraphs. Some had attempted this but not very successfully. The teacher felt that this had been because students did not have enough information in front of them so the exercise was being repeated with sufficient scaffolding and the students had a copy of the textbook, The Changing World of Work by Lesley Taylor to use for reference. However, students still struggled to find generalisations and put these into full sentences.

The final part of the day’s lesson focused on the assessment of a current issue task called “Zoning In.” This was highlighted on the board clearly as “NCEA level 2 2.6 Contemporary issue, internal assessment.” For this task, the students used a Newspapers In Education (NIE) fact file exercise. At the end of the allocated time, the teacher clapped. At this signal, the students were expected to stop, put their pens down and listen. The instructions given were to “pack up, do not take the textbook, and put bulk newspapers on the indicated pile.” He went over work that students still had to do which included sticking in the pages from the newspaper and completing the task, revising the meaning of the word generalisation, and to practise making them and to learn the information on the nature of work in New Zealand during and after The War (interestingly not referred to as World War II during this lesson). The lesson concluded with packing up instructions and a “number of minutes until the bell” warning. Students seemed very familiar with the routine as they moved about purposefully. The teacher did mention helping each other by checking under others’ seats for rubbish and putting chairs in.

The teacher explained that classes were normally “more discussion-based” and that “these kids are really good and do participate well and discuss stuff” and that this was “not a normal lesson by any stretch of the imagination.”

This teacher believed that the Social Studies online site was a step in the right direction regarding curriculum support. In his words, “Why the heck should we be re-inventing different ways of doing things?” He identified the isolation of this school as significant because teachers did not get to see and talk to other social studies teachers so they looked towards their head of department. This teacher felt acutely the responsibility of supporting and guiding staff.

4.0 Discussion of findings

This was an area school (Years 0-13) with a fairly new principal. Traditionally the school was divided into three: junior, middle and senior school. The staff were divided into primary and secondary. The principal had made determined efforts to achieve better linkage between these divisions, especially in curriculum continuity, policies and practices. Efforts had been part of a new charter and strategic plan and consistency between national curriculum statements and teachers’ plans and teaching. Student workbooks were regarded
as the quality indicator of classroom work. An issue was how to reduce fragmentation in Years 7-10, between departmental approaches. For example, health and PE were in separate departments.

In summary, this was a school in the process of addressing the curriculum, and at the time of data collection a lot had been achieved, especially high expectations of student achievement and better co-ordination of curriculum assessment, levels through the school, and planning and reporting.

5.0 Summary

- This was a moderate-sized school that covered all Years of schooling making the organisation of curriculum a complex task.
- Curriculum, as well as other aspects, was mainly organised and planned on a Year-levels syndicate basis rather than any organised curriculum teams.
- Year 9-10 had instituted a school qualification to increase attendance and motivation.
- OSH and ACC factors appeared to have limited the activities for learning outside the school grounds.
- Student work books were used for consistency at several Year levels.
Chapter Three: Discussion And Conclusions

This chapter summarises and discusses the major findings from the case studies described in Chapter Two. It is clear from even a brief review of the actual case studies that there is a great deal of information in them. A report of this kind does not have the scope to address all the data in detail. For this reason, this chapter extracts and focuses upon some aspects of curriculum implementation that stood out and could be the subject of further research. Therefore our analysis of the case study findings has been organised into six sections.

The first section in this chapter, the curriculum documents, relates to the impact of the curriculum structure and statements upon schools, including teaching the essential skills, achievement objectives and levels, assessment practices and reporting to parents on student achievement. The second, the impact of major policies, discusses the influence of the Education Review Office, Ministry of Education policies and school-based policies upon schools, teachers, and to some extent, students. The third section, practice and implementation, explores four approaches teachers appeared to find effective and used because they were linked in their view to positive student learning and/or manageability issues, such as curriculum coverage, catering for local needs, and teacher workload. Section four, support for teachers and teaching, incorporates findings about curriculum support for effective practice through resources and professional development. The fifth section, the impact of compliance, moves away slightly from the content specified in the questionnaire content to explore how both external and internal compliance demands effect the ways schools organise themselves for curriculum implementation. Finally, the summary and conclusions section draws together some overall trends, underlines the fact that a chapter such as this cannot do justice to the amount of data from qualitative case studies and makes comment about effectiveness in these schools. Examples are drawn from the case studies in each section, indented and identified by the school code so that readers can trace the examples back to the contextualised case study in each instance.

1. The curriculum documents

One of the intentions in carrying out case studies was to examine the connections between national curriculum documents and how a school re-worked them into their own plans and programmes. Teachers in these case studies reported that for the most part, they understood the national curriculum documents and were confident in using them. It needs to be noted that all of the case study schools were chosen because they were regarded as already effective in curriculum implementation in interpretation. Teachers made comments about variations in the documents’ language and structure, which they did not find particularly helpful. In these instances, they were referring to the seven curriculum documents, and they mentioned that they would have preferred more uniformity in the way the curriculum documents were set out and the contents categorised. Some issues were raised about the curriculum documents as to the place of essential skills, and values and attitudes in relation to the learning areas.

Teachers reported that having achievement objectives to guide them was clearly of benefit to their planning and teaching. However, teachers from many of the schools felt that the achievement objectives were too generic, so they had developed their own curriculum plans from the national documents to guide programme and lesson planning for their particular
students. For example, CP7 had developed curriculum guides to literally “guide” their practice through the curriculum documents in both implementing the curriculum and monitoring it:

The staff also have access to “curriculum guides” for all curriculum areas. These contained the specific curriculum policy, associated notes for guidance in delivery, two or three Year implementation plans, and lists of resources available within the school. Each classroom teacher is then required to have an “overview tracking book” that contains things like timetables, long-term plans, weekly plans, and unit plans. Assessment information is kept in a “curriculum tracking book.” One of the teachers interviewed described this book as being, “Like our Bible, you tend to take it home with you each day in case there is a fire; you’d be lost without it!” [Fieldnotes for CP7].

And at another contributing school (CP1), an Education Review Office Report commented that:

Teachers have drafted a new scheme to specify content and guide curriculum delivery. They have a useful monitoring sheet to ensure that they meet curriculum requirements. They have an increased awareness about learning in mathematics and demonstrate this in their classroom practice. [Fieldnotes for CP1]

At one intermediate school (I2) the two deputy principals had responsibility for curriculum integration and had developed and implemented a generic curriculum policy and specific implementation plans and programmes for both literacy and mathematics. As one explained:

We’ve set the policy and practices in mathematics and literacy. We’ve told the teachers that they have to do an hour of mathematics every day and half an hour of instructional reading every day. That’s now in concrete, there are no options.

Both [deputy principals] agreed that the aim of these seemingly rigid requirements was to “make a difference to students from entry to exit.” Their emphasis was on ensuring standardisation and consistency of teaching and assessment practices within classrooms so that information about student achievement in these two areas particularly, is reliable and accurate. [Fieldnotes for I2]

Re-organisation of the curriculum to suit local conditions was also occurring at the secondary level in more than one case. For example, at S2:

An innovative programme based on a system for assessing students’ achievement in each of the essential skills was introduced. This was designed to ensure students had the necessary learning skills to be successful at subsequent levels. The system aims to motivate students through programmes set at an appropriate level of student learning and specific feedback from teachers. This programme uses a credit system to determine students’ readiness for graduation with a Diploma in Learning at the end of Year 10. The allocation of credits gives an indication of the relative priorities for subjects at this school. At Years 9-10, mathematics and English were worth 150, social studies, science and PE were worth 120, health, the learning log were worth 80, and home economics was worth 40. Students were also required to complete modules. The modules were all worth 25 credits and were designed as tasters to enable students an informed choice of subjects at Year 11. Modules consist of 26 hours at two hours per week for 13 weeks. [Fieldnotes for S2]

This was similar to what was happening at A1 where:

Inconsistent student attendance (and motivation were) dealt with by instituting a Diploma of Learning for Years 9 and 10 with credits awarded for student achievement in their subject areas and in their personal and work skills including attendance. [Fieldnotes for A1]
This trend to reformat the national curriculum in each school appears to have been implemented for several reasons. First, it was to make the curriculum manageable and assist teachers to cover the aspects that the school intended should be covered. But as well as making the curriculum manageable by specifying content or topics, curriculum reformattting seemed to be tied to assessment and tracking of individuals and groups. It is interesting to note that this assessment and tracking was not primarily for diagnostic or formative reasons, but it related to “entry and exit levels,” curriculum tracking, and qualifications. For example, another secondary school (S3) was described as “having documentation formalised at all levels. Documents are used by everyone to continue established routines of communication, management and decision-making. The standardised forms, reports and policies are reviewed regularly and modified to be more manageable and meaningful.” Thus, compliance and accountability issues were important factors in developing school-wide curriculum systems that were noted across the case studies. These are dealt with later in this chapter.

Unsurprisingly then, assessment was an issue in documentation that ran across the case studies. In the secondary schools the assessment issues were mainly to do with implementing NCEA. Regular internal assessment placed a greater emphasis on work and study skills that schools found some of their students did not have. Teachers were trying to improve data collection and ways of communicating meaningful information on student achievement, and design suitable formats for student reports. In primary and intermediate schools, issues of consistency of curriculum coverage and tracking progress were common. In the area school we studied (A1), several of these assessment document issues were exemplified:

There is a school-wide assessment programme. In 2002, this covered visual language mathematics and science. The junior area curriculum committee for each nominated subject area would design the assessment to be used and mark the completed samples according to levels. Most of the data collected would go to the syndicate leader but if there was a concern then the issue would be passed up to the junior director. Concerns about any individual were passed on to the appropriate director and parents would be contacted.

The junior area had a system of data-gathering in place to assess, record and analyse student achievement. There were also procedures for following up the findings with support for individual students. The director stated several times that they feel it is not only important to collect data so they know where the kids are at but also to do something with that information to support students with needs.

The principal believed that the most important thing teachers have to do is to monitor student work so for him, student workbooks become a key record. Regarding the essential skills, from the principal’s perspective, he explained it is most important for teachers “to be aware of what these are and what they are there for.” Sometime in the next two years, he planned to gather information on the coverage of the essential skills across the school in all learning areas but this was not a priority. [Fieldnotes for A1]

Documentation and planning for assessment was, in most cases, highly regulated within each school. CP1 exemplifies this structured approach to planning and monitoring assessment:

A school-wide plan for checking on student achievement has been developed at the school level and implemented through planning and reporting mechanisms such as student achievement meetings, management meetings and at Board of Trustees’ retreats. It is set out as a yearly calendar with assessment expectations noted throughout the year. For example, in February, each teacher is expected to complete running records in reading with each child, Progressive Achievement Tests where appropriate, a Schonell spelling test, basics facts mathematics assessments for Year 3-6 students and a handwriting sample for each
student. As stated in the ERO report (2002) “teachers have opportunities within their teaching teams to examine data about their children and to identify implications for their teaching programmes.” [Fieldnotes for CP1]

An interesting observation is that of the nomenclature for teachers who take positions of responsibility in curriculum in the schools we studied. In more than one, “directors” have been established. For example, at A1 there was a junior and senior director, at CP1 there were directors of student achievement, literacy and numeracy, and at I2 there was a curriculum director. This subtle change in the names of titles for teachers within schools raises questions about who and what is valued; it is possible these roles and titles represent greater importance being given to curriculum leadership and its content.

The issue of teacher content knowledge is an important one. The teachers themselves indicated wide variation in their own knowledge of curriculum areas and questioned whether the documents were helpful for those who did not have a sound knowledge base. Perhaps this is one explanation for the large amount of collaboration in the preparation of long-term school and syndicate plans that emerged as pivotal in school approaches to curriculum implementation. Knowledge shared related to content and the meaning of achievement objectives, and planning units, approaches and activities known to be successful in teaching specific content within the curriculum. Appleton (2000) suggests that a concern with “activities that work” is a phenomenon common to teachers who taught primary school science in countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom where teachers lacked confidence and strong science knowledge, and rarely used textbooks. The findings from the case studies indicate that this may also be the case in New Zealand, and that it is not just restricted to science. That is, shortcomings in teacher content leads to giving students many activities to keep them busily engaged yet possibly not being challenged to learn substantive content.

Some teachers suggested that a single curriculum statement in each learning area raised issues about the relevance of the levels for low decile primary schools and how to cater for diverse student needs. For example, teachers at CP2 commented that this was a particular concern for new entrants (Year 1). They had resorted to using the early childhood curriculum statement Te Whariki for many of their students. There were also some calls for more guidance in the national documents about how to cater for diverse student needs. The guidance could be in the form of supplementary explanatory adjuncts to the national statements. Connected with this issue was the widespread use of the eight curriculum levels, set out in the documents, to describe students, plan teaching units and organise assessment. In almost all of the case study schools, up to Year 10 (from where NCEA took over as the organising framework) standardised planning and assessment sheets were used by teachers who were required to identify the level of the curriculum that their lessons were aimed at.

For example, at FP4:

Teachers generally planned units themselves, and this teacher used an electronic template onto which she typed up each of her units. This template included headings such as achievement objectives, context, essential skills, learning outcomes, teaching/learning experiences and assessment. [Fieldnotes for FP4]

The strength of this was to focus teachers on specific achievement objectives and specific learning outcomes. The danger is that specified targets based on levels are emphasised,
rather than taking children on from wherever they may be in their individual learning about any aspect. However, according to the evidence in the case studies, teachers self-reported that while they used school-wide formats to plan, they also tried to fit the plans to their students’ readiness to learn.

2. The impact of major policies

The findings revealed some confusion among teachers about what is government policy and what decisions can be largely made by teachers. For some reason, teachers have come to believe that they should “cover everything.” At many of these schools, they complained about an overcrowded curriculum and blamed the government, as if there is a policy that requires them to “cover everything.” The impacts discussed in this section relate more to the pressures felt by schools and teachers to “fit everything in” and the fact that there never seemed to be enough time for teachers to do everything they have to do. These issues are strongly related to each other as it was often the pressure to do everything that drove the feeling of a lack of time. This is not a new finding. Other researchers (for example, Hill, 2000; Thrupp et al., 2000) have noted similar themes. What was noticeable in these case studies was that teachers and school leaders had devised ways of coping, such as integration, team unit planning, designing school-wide or syndicate systems for curriculum implementation, and standardisation of school practices, as follows:

Currently we have a policy for every curriculum area and within curriculum areas there are policies within policies. What I am aiming for is one generic curriculum delivery policy, one that will set out expectations for curriculum delivery so that we’ve got some sort of consistency across our school. [Fieldnotes for CP6]

In terms of efficiency, she [a teacher] commented on a mathematics planning sheet that listed the curriculum achievement objectives, on which she circled those she was using for a particular unit. It appeared that this teacher valued prepared planning sheets because they saved her from needing to “re-invent the wheel.” [Fieldnotes for CP6]

In relation to this same time pressure constraint, she went on to express some ambivalence towards syndicate programmes that while on the one hand reduced her workload, also reduced the amount of time she has available with her whole class. [Fieldnotes for CP4]

The way our senior syndicate works is really good, we stream for our mathematics, we stream for our fitness, we have a rotation with our PE which is really good. It means I only have to plan one unit and evaluate one unit and I get all these evaluations from the other teachers, which is wonderful. At the same time, it [sort of] cuts into your day a lot as well though. [Fieldnotes for CP4]

The above examples show how teachers had worked together to overcome what would otherwise be excessive demands upon individual teachers. It should be noted, however, that government policy was that there would be seven curriculum areas, but there is no government policy that dictates how teachers go about their school level planning and teaching from the seven statements.

Interestingly, there was a distinction between the case studies undertaken early in 2002 and those completed in 2003. There had been a discernible terminology shift to using literacy instead of “language” or “English,” and numeracy in place of “maths.” This has come about because of government policy which placed renewed emphasis upon these two areas – literacy and numeracy.

Usually what happens is that we have people who come in, at the moment we have a focus on literacy, [adviser] is doing the literacy thing. We have facilitators who come out and then it’s [sort of] a branching down process I suppose. It seems to work reasonably well. I
mean we’re probably not 100 percent up-to-date with everything, but I think you’d find we’re not too bad. [Fieldnotes for CP4]

This strong focus on literacy and numeracy was recorded in every primary school and in the Year 9 and 10 areas of the area school and each secondary school case study. Coverage of these areas was a focus in the planning, with some schools providing suggested timetables for how much time should be spent on these areas (see the compliance section below). They were very specific in these plans about which strands should be covered and some provided units across the school to ensure that this happened. As explained above, these units and plans were developed, in most cases, by curriculum teams and implemented in syndicates and by teachers.

Related to this trend of systemic (across school) planning, several schools provided assessment programmes and sheets that specified the achievement objectives to be taught and assessed at each Year level. For example:

The school Assessment Schedule shows the planning for school-wide, classroom assessment and reporting to parents over the period of a year. The plan shows a systematic collection of school-wide data for aggregation to help with future planning, teaching and resource allocation. Numeracy and literacy are highlighted and some summative testing for aggregation in other curriculum areas is done within the school focus theme. Ongoing formative assessment strategies and techniques are expected to be undertaken within each classroom programme and this may be planned at team level or by the individual teacher. [Fieldnotes for CP3]

Tracking sheets are used in each curriculum area to help ensure a balanced coverage of the curriculum. Teachers are required to keep these up-to-date as well as [being] a “checker to make sure they are not repeating topics or objectives over the years.” [Fieldnotes for CP2]

In summary, government policy inevitably impacts upon teachers and schools. New curriculum statements in the 1990s caused schools to review the way national curriculum was incorporated into social plans. It is difficult to say how much processes of planning changed compared with what was planned to respond to the new national statements. But what was also clear was that schools themselves are very policy-driven. Among other things, having school-wide policies seems to cut down time-consuming practices and make assessment practices consistent throughout a school. Almost every school studied had a folder or collection of school-wide system policies that drove practice in each school. This finding was connected to another finding that, in general, teachers in today’s schools were required to be team players, willing to work in collaborative teams and comply with school-generated policies.

### 3. Practice and implementation

The findings discussed in this section are related to the last two sections, the impact of the curriculum documents and major policies. We reveal ways in which teachers were implementing curriculum and identify issues related to their practice. The main findings in this section are related to assessment, curriculum and assessment leadership, and particular issues related to small/rural schools (there being many schools of this type in New Zealand).
Assessment

Some assessment findings and issues have been discussed elsewhere in this chapter because they seemed to be associated with issues of compliance, the impact of government policies and curriculum documentation. The discussion in this section touches on some of these findings but attempts to draw together the main findings about assessment practices that emerged from the case studies. Firstly, most if not all schools had developed their own student achievement data-gathering systems to meet the requirements of the National Administrative Guidelines (NAGs) and what schools perceived as Education Review Office requirements.

In many instances these systems included computerised software packages, either commercial or school-made. These software packages and systems enabled schools to collect and collate data on student achievement across the whole school. In some schools, those data fed forward into school, programme and lesson planning. For example, as noted earlier, in one school the deputy principal had the title of “director of student achievement.” It was her job to implement school-wide assessment, analyse the results and convene school-wide meetings to identify barriers to learning and plan for school-wide improvement. In another school, syndicate leaders collated assessment information and used it to set up school-wide groups that would lead teachers to adapt their programme planning.

Several schools used commercially produced software packages which meant that the teachers had to organise their expectations of student achievement according to the way the software package dictated in these schools. Thus, the commercial package and not necessarily the school was driving expectations, assessment, reporting and, to an extent, teaching and learning programmes. For example, at FP7:

The assessment standards were from Multi Serve’s 4D Achieve programme. The charts indicated that level 1 achievement objectives would be covered by: Years 0, 1-2; level 2 objectives by Years 3-4; level 3 by Years 5-6; and level 4 by Years 7-8. While there was no evidence of greater multi-levelling of children’s learning in either the achievement objectives or expected learning outcomes sections, the assessment standards section indicated what children would be doing at the end of each year. [Fieldnotes for FP7]

In many of the schools this school-wide approach to collecting and using school-wide student achievement data was used solely for reporting purposes – reports to parents, the Board of Trustees, and annually, to the Ministry of Education. Teachers in these schools were clear about how student achievement could inform future planning, for example:

School-wide achievement is collected and analysed through national tests such as Progressive Achievement Tests, School Entry Assessment tests, STAR and the Record of Oral Language. Much of the school-wide achievement data is collected and analysed through a computer programme. This has meant that information is easily accessible to senior management and staff. Assessment information in the numeracy and literacy areas is the main focus but information in the other curriculum areas is collected and collated and all data is used for future planning and resourcing and programming. [Fieldnotes for CP2]

Literacy and numeracy assessment predominated in most primary case study schools. This is referred to in the CP2 example above and in reports from other schools, such as:

Literacy and numeracy are the main curricula foci with special attention paid to students’ oral language. Competence in oral language is believed to be the foundation for the development of all other curricula but special attention is also paid to students’ health and knowing how to take care of their bodies. [Fieldnotes for FP8]
High achievement is valued and encouraged, and resources have been made available to support accelerant groups within the senior school. There is a specific focus on literacy and numeracy in Years 1–4, and alongside this, a commitment to organise programmes under selected “rich concepts” which allow, where appropriate, for the curriculum integration mentioned above. [Fieldnotes for FP3]

The allocation of time on class timetables for social studies was being squeezed by attention to literacy and numeracy. [Fieldnotes for A1]

Student progress in all their subjects was monitored twice a year to check on the development of their essential skills. Information was also collected, analysed and reported for the following: numeracy and literacy achievement, graduation rates for each Year level, Māori achievement, and examination, scholarship and qualification success. [Fieldnotes for S2]

There was evidence that teachers in some schools were knowledgeable about, and using, national assessment tools such as asTTle (Assessment tools for teaching and learning), PATs (Progressive Achievement Tests), the new national exemplars in writing and mathematics and the ENP (Early Numeracy Project) and ANP (Advanced Numeracy Project) assessment tools:

The curriculum development for this year (2002) shows the school’s overall foci on numeracy and literacy, ICT, school in-service on the arts document, development of the Māori Achievement plan (the only recommendation from the last ERO report), as well as participation in the national exemplar project. [Fieldnotes for FP6]

The Assessment Folder houses all the required assessment information, for example, standardised tests results such as PATs, PRETOS (Proof Reading Tests of Spelling), running records, as well as ongoing summative and formative tests and assessments in all curriculum areas. This folder is monitored by team leaders each term and the first and second DP also check it during appraisal discussions. A DP may also ask to see this folder at any time during the year. [Fieldnotes for I2]

In the secondary schools, however, assessment seemed focused on NCEA with some attention given to using similar modularised assessment in Years 9-10.

There was some evidence that the setting of school targets and objectives outlined earlier was beginning to drive assessment within primary schools at least. For example, at one school:

Student progress towards meeting targets for school-wide achievement is determined through a variety of measures such as Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs), asTTle testing, the new essential skills test put out by the Ministry of Education, Australian science and mathematics tests, the National Education Monitoring Project, national exemplars, running records, six-year survey data and something the principal calls the “school standards.” He commented that, “We have what we call the national norm standards but we have our standards too. We have found that what others have classified as a level 1 standard was too low for our school. We want to be able to make comparisons with schools like ours, for instance, in decile ranking. So in the meantime we have created our own “Expectation” standards for children to meet. [Fieldnotes for CP7]

This school’s ERO report commended them on their ability to track student achievement. The following extract from the case study indicates the importance of being able to use this type of data to reflect upon and improve practice:

School-wide aggregation of assessment information is well organised and reported on, particularly in the areas of numeracy and literacy. ERO has commended the school on the systems in place for collecting and aggregating data. They state that, “Detailed analysis of achievement data provides school management with information on the progress of boys, girls and groups across a range of subjects. The board is well informed on achievement
trends and issues and uses achievement information to make informed decisions.” The principal stressed the importance of this information stating that, “This process is really important, it guides my thinking and planning towards resources we may need as well as PD my teachers might need to help them ‘come up to speed’ in a certain area. It tells us where we ‘fit’ against others and how well we are doing.” [Fieldnotes for CP7]

At one of the intermediates studied, the principal also had a strong focus on targets:

She provides the board with information on, “where things are at with the curriculum, what the targets that have been set are and how well we are achieving these goals.” The need to provide the board with greater “hard data” was expressed, hence the current push towards whole-school standardisation in mathematics and literacy assessment information particularly. [Fieldnotes for I2]

However, it was not always clear whether this type of information always fed back into planning and teaching for improvement. This is a challenge that it seems some schools have still to meet. In fact, the deputy principal at I2 indicated this challenge when she said:

This is an exciting time for us. From the information we collect we are going to be able to use this historical data to set targets, make plans and take action. Over time it will be really good to see if we have made a difference. [deputy principal, I2]

Another example of how the language and practice of targets are filtering into schools is demonstrated by this report on FP8:

The curriculum leader provides support and guidance in delivering the school plan, working with the whole staff, syndicate or individual teachers. She is responsible for developing the curriculum plan for mathematics and also monitoring, recording and analysing school-wide data. She was also responsible for working with staff to develop teaching targets for each level. [Fieldnotes for FP8]

The important issue here is the extent to which school-wide assessment informed planning and teaching, as well as being used to report to the school board and parents. There was some evidence that at least some standardised assessment fed back into programme planning and professional development as well as being reported to Boards of Trustees and to ERO as outlined above. The impression gained from reading across the case studies, however, is that, in the main, this information was being used for reporting and, at secondary schools, for qualifications. Only in one or two instances did the teachers interviewed indicate that in their view, there was a relationship between the data gathered and better student achievement. An instance of this was at CP1 where the deputy principal had the title of “director of student achievement” and spent a great deal of time analysing PATs and other results (such as asTTle) to discover why students were (or were not) achieving and feeding this information back to classroom teachers.

In other schools the relationship was far less clear. Generally, it was informal and often serendipitous. For example, at CP4, one teacher explained:

There’s an expectation with the assessment of baseline things that are done in every room and that is a not-negotiable type thing. There are written language profiles which are filled in some certain way, because of the expectation that paperwork would be done, the programmes would have to have been in place for those particular assessments to be made. In mathematics, reading and language areas, there are particular profile sheets that each child has and that come through each year, all of those profile sheets and things, because some of them are used over a period of years, come in a bundle with the child, and I would soon pick up a particular room coming through that didn’t have certain work samples that showed some sort of development. [Fieldnotes for CP4]
Although professional development and new assessment tools were beginning to have an impact, it appears that principals and teachers at many schools still needed further professional development to assist them with this vital aspect of teaching and learning.

**Curriculum and assessment leadership**

Related to the assessment findings, it also emerged that leadership in curriculum and assessment was a vital ingredient in “making a difference.” New principals had recently been appointed to several of the schools in the sample and this had impacted upon where schools were in terms of their curriculum implementation. For example, in one two-teacher rural school, the acting principal saw her role as being caretaker of the existing systems as well as making sure there were policies in place for whoever was next appointed into the role:

As acting principal, she sees her role as overseeing existing programmes to ensure that curriculum policies are completed, and where possible, are addressed in the classroom. Implementation plans, which were in existence during her time as principal, have now been mislaid, and she is currently redoing the mathematics plan and the health and physical education plan, with the assistance of the other staff members. [Fieldnotes for FP1]

In another school with a new principal, curriculum review had dominated the school’s action in the recent past:

The principal, new to the school in late 2001, concurred with the ERO report but decided a major review of all curriculum implementation documentation was actually necessary. Practice was ahead of policy in many areas. The school’s review cycle had been broken and the task of reviewing all documentation would be lengthy. He believed it might possibly never re-align so a review, and simplification, of all curriculum implementation plans was being undertaken. The view is to create a curriculum support system that both reflects current practice and can be easily kept up-to-date. [Fieldnotes for CP5]

In many cases, excluding the smaller schools where all needed to be involved in curriculum leadership, the curriculum leadership role was the responsibility of deputy and assistant principals in primary schools and heads of faculty or department and curriculum convenor in secondary schools. In some larger schools the principals made it quite clear that this was not their primary focus but rather a specialist job carried out by people in the senior management team. For example, at one intermediate school:

The first DP has a non-teaching position and is in charge of curriculum within the school and has the title of Curriculum Director. The second DP has classroom responsibilities and leadership in assessment. The third DP also has classroom responsibilities as well as leadership in performance management and professional development. The principal explained the thinking behind this structure was his belief that the “power base in a school should involve as many people as possible so that there is a shared ownership of the organisation.” He stated that he felt it was important to give people opportunities to become leaders and saw his role in this as providing the time and resources and then to “get out of their way and let them get on with the job.” [Fieldnotes for I2]

At a large urban contributing school, the principal saw his role as community liaison and overseeing all aspects of the school while the rest of the senior management team had specific responsibility for curriculum:

As well as their management roles, the DP and AP have specific curriculum co-ordination roles – the DP being “director of student achievement” and the AP “director of numeracy.” Another senior teacher is the “director of literacy” and other teachers have responsibility for the other curriculum areas. Each “director” and “lead” teacher has a group of teachers with
interest and/or expertise in the area to assist them to prepare policies, schemes and long-term plans for that curriculum area. These curriculum groups meet regularly, at least once a term but more often when there is a major initiative (such as the introduction of a new programme) underway. [Fieldnotes for CP1]

This common school organisation suggests that there may be ways in which middle management can be assisted through professional development and specific education in assessment and curriculum that might assist them to improve their curriculum and assessment leadership and management.

**Issues for small and/or rural schools**

The size and the location of smaller primary schools impacted upon the curriculum policy making, implementation and organisation. It also affected teachers’ workloads in that there was no middle management layer to take responsibility for particular areas. One principal from such a school described it this way:

> Everyone has to take on a leadership role at one time or another. She saw this as a blessing and a hindrance at times. I would say it is difficult in a smaller school to get the specialisation and range of expertise from individuals. So we all have to wear many hats…but in the end I believe this is a feature of our school, sharing is part of our day to day culture. [Fieldnotes for FP6]

While this can seem to be very demanding in terms of workload, it can also be a strength:

> The latest ERO report, published in April 2002, states that a feature of the school is the strong professional leadership provided by the principal and the collective shared strengths of a highly committed staff. [Fieldnotes for FP6]

As a two-teacher school, the management of curriculum is directed by the principal, with duties and responsibilities shared between the two classroom teachers and the part time teacher. The principal explained that she believes in teachers working to their strengths, and this appears to be working comfortably between the three staff members, i.e., she is responsible and has a special interest in mathematics and social studies, the senior room teacher is responsible for health and physical education, and the part-time teacher is responsible for language programmes in the school. [Fieldnotes for FP1]

> There is no syndicate structure as such, but with the recent roll growth, teachers now tend to work in pairs to plan programmes and sometimes parallel teach. [Fieldnotes for FP3]

Another issue raised by teachers in these small schools related to the possibility of limited experiences and opportunities for their students. However, being aware of the possibility caused at least one school studied to turn this situation to the students’ advantage:

> In terms of the national curriculum, the principal was aware that students could be disadvantaged because of the isolated nature of the school environment and the limited resources available. She felt it was important to take advantage of educational opportunities outside of the classroom, make good use of the expertise of the community, i.e., inviting a private music tutor to work in the school during school time, and to ensure that students were provided with a wide range of experiences in all curriculum areas. Her vision for these students was to encourage them to become independent learners who would take responsibility for their own learning and in doing so, create a sound basis for the future. In support of this view, the latest Education Review Office Report (2001) states, “Children from this school receive a ‘well rounded’ education based on national syllabus requirements. Rich educational opportunities have been provided through a number of locally developed programmes.” [Fieldnotes for FP1]

Interestingly, traditional rural school curriculum events, such as “calf day,” grandparents’ days and school camps still seemed to be a feature of their curricula. It appears that the
community expects this part of their culture and parents (if they have a choice) often choose to send their children there because of these “community-flavoured” aspects.

Teaching in small schools was challenging, particularly how to cater to several years of students in planning and actual lessons. However, certain benefits were evident, such as knowing the students thoroughly, being able to plan across years to avoid unnecessary repetition, and being able to take advantage of flexibility as topics for study arose at short notice. Greater “seamlessness” was possible.

4. Support for teachers and teaching

The findings regarding curriculum support for teachers and teaching mainly fell into two groups, resources and professional development. These are dealt with separately below, but in reality much overlap exists and the nature of support for teachers and teaching is an important issue in and of itself. For example, without the support of the curriculum documents, school systems of management, resource materials and professional development opportunities, teachers in these schools would be very different. In other words, it is to a large extent the impact of all of the factors reported in this chapter that makes these teachers what they are: their views and practices. We report and discuss below how, first, resource materials and second, professional development assisted and impacted upon curriculum implementation in the case study schools.

Resources

Fieldnotes in CP2 show several issues to do with resources for the curriculum:

There was a clear call for supporting resources in all areas of the curriculum. Teachers were very grateful for the supplementary materials that have already been provided and in particular Ministry of Education resources. However, many found it time-consuming to locate, modify and adapt the suggestions contained in these resources for their own classroom use. For example, ENP and ANP, and Māori resources were cited as “taking large amounts of production time before teachers could use materials with their students.” At one low decile urban school the need for more “relevant” material for Māori [resources] was mentioned as in some areas it was felt teachers were left to “create their own resources in order to meet the children’s needs.” [Fieldnotes for CP2]

It should be noted, however, that two aspects of resource availability need to be considered. On one hand, sometimes teachers were unaware that useful resources existed so may have claimed that there was a lack of resources. On the other hand, there is the question of whether teachers actually tried out resources even when they were aware of them. What encourages them to use a resource? Some teachers were aware of ample resources, but felt the pressures of time limited opportunities to study them and needed more time to work them into their programme. This issue requires further research attention.

Teachers indicated that they were accessing Te Kete Ipurangi, English Online and Maths Online regularly and using and adapting the ready-made units:

One teacher in a full primary school exemplified this when she explained that she used a range of resources to help her planning. She stated that the TKI site was very useful, particularly English Online. Ministry of Education supplementary books in science and mathematics were also used frequently. (Fieldnotes for FP5)

However, teachers also mentioned that it was difficult to create the time to access these useful sites and resources, in order to study their usefulness.
Teachers were emphatic that they needed to adapt resources and units to ensure they met the needs and interests of their students. School cultures also caused teachers to feel that they should re-work materials to meet each school’s “way”:

In the case of those science books, sometimes we just have used those models, the models of those lessons that are given. I have found those booklets very useful and I wish they had some of those for other things. I find social studies particularly difficult for juniors, because most of the resources are quite advanced and you get sick of having to rethink and drop it down a peg or two to try and work something for your own little kids. [Fieldnotes for CP5]

This teacher also commented that more resources of this kind would be welcome in other curriculum areas, for example social studies and tailored specifically for younger children.

One way in which primary schools appeared to economise on the time it takes to customise published resources for their use, was to work in syndicate planning teams. Each teacher within a syndicate took responsibility for preparing plans for units, often based on resources from Te Kete Ipurangi, English, or Maths Online. At CP1, it happened this way:

It seemed that mathematics and language were usually planned on a teacher-by-teacher or a Year group basis to meet the differentiated needs of the children in each class/Year group, whereas other curriculum areas were more likely to be based on unit plans. These unit plans were often planned at only one level of the curriculum and often implemented through whole-class teaching. This said, however, one “lead” teacher did explain how, in technology, he encouraged a differentiated approach for his students within technology units through a problem-solving approach. Planning for units occurs across the school at the teaching team level in most instances. Based on the schemes and long-term plans prepared by the curriculum teams, each teaching team plans, teaches and assesses units at the level of the curriculum appropriate to that Year group level. [Fieldnotes for CP1]

In one of the secondary schools, curriculum units or modules based on subjects were even more formally designated as follows:

The system aims to motivate students through programmes set at an appropriate level of student learning and specific feedback from teachers. This programme uses a credit system to determine student’s readiness for graduation with Diploma in Learning at the end of Year 10. The allocation of credits gives an indication of the relative priorities for subjects at this school. At Years 9-10, mathematics and English were worth 150, social studies, science and PE were worth 120, health, the learning log were worth 80 and home economics was worth 40. Students were also required to complete modules. The modules were all worth 25 credits and were designed as tasters to enable students an informed choice of subjects at Year 11. Modules consist of 26 hours at two hours per week for 13 weeks. At Year 9, the modules listed were food technology, materials, technology and design technology, ICT skills, Te Reo Māori, and drama. At Year 10, the modules listed were art, film, Te Reo Māori, music, graphics, and textiles. [Fieldnotes for S2]

Some teachers commented that standardising and sharing planning and the resources that might be used not only saved time but also ensured that they fitted with the ethos of “how things were done” in their school. For example, a teacher at CP5 explained it:

I need written things. I like to have plans there so that I can refer to them. I think if I didn’t have plans I’d probably think, oh, what are we going to do today? I find them good as a guide, and keeping me up to the mark with what I’m supposed to be doing.

The notion that there is a “school way,” or expectation, which her teaching should reflect is clearly evident in this quote, and consistent with her concern to be “up to the mark.” [Fieldnotes for CP5]
School-wide achievement is collected and analysed through national tests such as Progressive Achievement Tests, School Entry Assessment tests, STAR and the Record of Oral Language. Much of the school-wide achievement data is collected and analysed through a computer programme, this has meant that information is easily accessible to senior management and staff. [Fieldnotes for CP2]

As well as having collaborative and standardised planning formats, the use of standardised coverage and assessment formats also emerged as a theme as noted earlier under assessment policies. As described, schools purchased or acquired published systems and formats to track what they teach and keep records about student results. These prepared materials impacted on what was taught, how it was taught and assessed, and how the results were communicated to students, parents and the community. For example, CP2 used a computer programme to collect and analyse school-wide data from standardised instruments:

School-wide achievement is collected and analysed through national tests such as Progressive Achievement Tests, School Entry Assessment tests, STAR and the Record of Oral Language. Much of the school-wide achievement data is collected and analysed through a computer programme, this has meant that information is easily accessible to senior management and staff. [Fieldnotes for CP2]

Most primary schools in the sample used pre-prepared mathematics achievement objective tracking sheets and unit planning sheets. Schools explained their use as “ensuring the curriculum was covered and school policy implemented.” The use of tracking sheets to ensure a balanced curriculum was referred to earlier, but also indicated a standardisation within, and to an extent, between, schools:

There are tracking sheets for teachers to monitor coverage of achievement objectives, and balance in their planning. At present these are pages copied from a commercially available teacher planning aid book, listing strands and achievement objectives. As objectives are covered in units of work, they are highlighted to provide an overview of coverage at a glance. The sheets are handed from one teacher to next each year as children progress through the school so repetition can be avoided. A school replacement is currently under development that will include a list of units taught, contexts and settings. Eventually the tracking sheets will also be linked to the school’s student achievement monitoring system, currently under development. This will then allow individual pupil profiles to be kept that show students’ exposure to, and attainment of, the learning objectives in all curriculum areas. [Fieldnotes for FP7]

Schools had worked hard to establish and build “rich” collections of teaching and learning resources for their teachers and students. Several schools in this sample had recently extended libraries, resource rooms and ICT facilities to accommodate the increase in their resources and ensure their accessibility. Money from operations grants, school-raised funds and Ministry of Education grants had been used for these purposes. The following extracts from two case studies exemplify this trend:

This school has had considerable renovation in the last few years and further upgrades of the library, technology, music and classroom facilities are planned for completion in the near future. [Fieldnotes for CP1]

This decile 8 school was established 40 years ago on this site as part of a tradition 200 years old. The school has undertaken considerable building development and refurbishment over recent years with further specialist rooms planned for completion in the near future. [Fieldnotes for Si3]
The overall impression from the case studies is that the schools are well-resourced, first on the basis of availability (with considerable Ministry of Education input) and second, awareness that the resources exist (by teachers), and willingness to adapt them to specific classrooms.

**Professional development**

The majority of schools and teachers gave high priority to whole-school/department professional development. This was particularly evident in the primary area with regard to literacy and mathematics (Early Numeracy Project and Advanced Numeracy Project) and in the secondary schools with regard to NCEA. For example, CP1 was undertaking professional development for the whole school in spelling while the case study research was underway. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, not only had the school chosen a school-wide spelling programme to implement, it had contracted an Australian consultant to run professional development on the programme for both staff and parents. They were also in the process of adjusting school-wide policies in line with the new spelling programme and were holding curriculum and syndicate team meetings in order to do this.

Another example of whole-school professional development is explained below in an intermediate school.

The school generally has several whole-school curriculum foci for the year. This is where the majority of the professional development money is targeted. The people responsible for the curriculum area plan for any professional development requirements and requests are made to the principal and the Board of Trustees for the money needed. This year, the key foci appear to be numeracy and literacy, the arts, in particular dance and drama, and social studies. Next year, the school-wide focus will continue to be numeracy and literacy with science planning, teaching and assessment becoming a priority. [Fieldnotes for I2]

There was a variety of approaches to the implementation of professional development in schools and most included a mix of Ministry of Education contracts and other types of professional development. One school explained their approach like this:

The principal and DP explain that the process is the same for their teachers who are also encouraged to be risk-takers, inquirers, challengers and “team players.” Both senior management leaders consider PD to be a vital component of the school’s growth as a “learning community.”

The professional development of teachers in this school, therefore, is highly valued and significant time and resources are set aside for this purpose. The DP commented on the importance of PD within the school stating, “Because we value PD so much we make it very clear when we hire staff that it has a huge emphasis in our school and that this is a requirement not a wish.” At the beginning of each year before the start of the first term, the school holds a retreat which usually occurs over several days. It is here that collaborative review, discussion and debate occur about the new year policies, plans and practices. It is also used as a time to introduce new staff to the school “culture” and vision for learning and teaching.

Generally the emphasis is on whole-school professional development which may involve Ministry of Education development contracts, outside “experts,” including advisers and outside contractors, or workshops by specific curriculum professional advisory group members (PAG) (curriculum teams). One of the PAG leaders described the school’s philosophy on whole-school PD stating, “The school believes that it is important that everybody is trying out the same things and that you get a more unified group situation with people counting on each other. This doesn’t always happen when individuals go off to courses on their own. The ideas become isolated and unconnected with others.” [Fieldnotes for FP5]
There was some comment that the Early Numeracy Project (ENP) and Advanced Numeracy Project (ANP) were dominating teacher time and attention and school resources in primary schools. For example, in one intermediate school case study it was noted:

The main focus for all teachers and students was on the advanced numeracy project. A member of the advisory service had played a key role in supporting the staff, professional development and the programme in classrooms. [Fieldnotes for I1]

Some schools had hired commercial consultants, even to the extent of bringing them from Australia (CP1). One school staff had visited Australian schools. Another approach was to pay for a teaching programme that came with a professional development package for both teachers and the parents. There was also evidence of visits to other New Zealand schools.

Due to the extensive range of opportunities the teachers in these case study schools appear to have had, they were more able to critique the professional development programmes they have participated in. Some expressed disappointment with some aspects of their professional development experiences. There was some reaction against other teachers simply sharing what they did in their classrooms without facilitation and one suggestion was that time was needed for teachers to develop an understanding of the philosophies behind the curriculum statements. However, there were examples of effective PD.

Professional development budgets were allocated in various ways. Professional development was identified in strategic plans and teachers negotiated with senior management to get PD access to assist them to meet goals set through appraisal and performance management systems. For example, at one school:

The school generally has several curriculum foci for the year and it is here that the majority of professional development money is targeted. The money is set by the Board of Trustees and kept in a central pool. It is then allocated to the school-wide foci and towards individual professional development areas indicated by teachers during their appraisal. Staff negotiate individual professional development with the principal. The emphasis appears to be put on school-wide rather than individual development. However, the principal stressed that the board was generally very supportive of “extras” requested by the staff. [Fieldnotes for FP6]

5. **The impact of compliance**

A mandated national curriculum requires school authorities and teachers to plan school learning programmes that are substantially based upon national curriculum guidelines. Thus, compliance is an accepted dimension of a system with a national curriculum, such as in New Zealand. The case studies produced interesting findings in relation to compliance. It emerged as a strong theme through all of the case study schools and is vital to understanding curriculum implementation in New Zealand schools today. Some issues that emerged were clearly linked to how schools were organising themselves to meet government policy, the teachers’ conditions of employment, and regulations such as the revised *National Education Goals* (NEGs) and the *National Administration Guidelines* (NAGs) (Ministry of Education, 1999). Others were related to the Education Review Office’s expectations in its role as an external reviewer. These are dealt with next. But in contrast, other compliance issues to do with how the curriculum would be implemented within each school that did not arise from government policy, regulation or external expectations were observed. These were in the form of “perceived requirements” (Hill, 2000; Locke and Hill, 2003) and decisions made by teachers within schools about what “should” be done. These are dealt with in the second half of this section:
Compliance with national policies

Clearly, as described above, the NEGs and the NAGs have impacted on the way schools implement curriculum and the way teachers teach. But in addition, external agencies and internal management and review policies have also brought about new forms of compliance within the schools we studied. For example, ERO’s views were communicated to schools through their (usually) three-yearly reports on each schools performance. In contrast with earlier research (see for example, Hill, 2000; Thrupp, Harold, Mansell and Hawksworth, 2000), views of ERO from these case study teachers were generally positive and reviewers were not portrayed as dominating what was happening in these 23 schools. This may have been linked to the fact that the schools chosen for the case studies were screened on the basis of a relatively positive ERO report. But principals and teachers interviewed also commented on the positive feedback they had had from ERO and that the suggestions about what they still needed to work on were helpful.

For example, at CP2, a low decile school that had a number of curriculum policies and practices under review at the time of our study, “the last ERO report was very positive about the systems and procedures that were in place at that time.” [Fieldnotes for CP2]

At CP3, ERO had confirmed the innovative direction the school was taking, based on a school-wide philosophy, stating that:

The school has developed an educational philosophy that focuses on empowering students to be involved in and take responsibility for their learning. This philosophy is one which senior management stresses as vital for staff development also. The importance of promoting teacher empowerment and collaboration in any change process is a key factor in the policy and practice within the school. [Fieldnotes for CP3]

At CP5, ERO had gently suggested an area for improvement, thus:

Current classroom practice is ahead of some of the school’s documentation, and it would be timely to re-examine some implementation plans to include information which reflects new developments and approaches. [Fieldnotes for CP5]

And at FP7, a rural primary school, the principal had requested a review by the ERO in order to assist the school to make improvements. As a result of that review, ERO commented that:

Programmes are based on the essential learning areas of The New Zealand Curriculum Framework [and] there is also evidence in planning documents of inclusion of essential skills.

The report went on to say, however, that while teaching and learning programmes in most areas were based on national curriculum statements, teachers had had little recent professional development associated with implementation of these statements and so had not always kept up-to-date with changing perspectives. Much of the school documentation that guided teacher planning was also outdated, and not regarded as important by teachers. Closer attention to the balance of strand coverage in all learning areas was needed. In summary, the report stated that, “An immediate challenge for the staff is to work as a team to establish and implement effective school-wide systems for curriculum development. The updating and development of documentation to guide teachers’ planning and programme delivery should be a priority focus area.” [Fieldnotes for FP7]

This assisted the school, the Board of Trustees and the wider community to embark on a programme of updating documentation and improving curriculum delivery, as explained in that case study.
Teachers in the intermediate and secondary case study schools commented upon similar supportive comments and points for improvement. In one secondary school, ERO had noted an over-emphasis on teacher-centred delivery and this was still evident in technology classes several years later. However, due to the ERO report, the senior teachers at the school acknowledged this and were working to improve the situation.

The changes that have occurred both in schools and ERO over the last three years appear to have shifted ERO's impact from in some cases, almost punitive to positive. This shift is discussed by Crooks (2003) in tracing the changes in accountability in New Zealand schools. He argued that there is now a more “intelligent” form of accountability within the ERO ethos. This is in contrast to the 1990s when (as he explains):

The first model of review adopted, Accountability (compliance) Audits. These focused on checking whether features required by legislation or school charters were present in the schools. A checklist approach was used, focusing on relatively easily checked features ranging from the display of fire exit signs to the development of school policies and evidence of paperwork related to the government’s curriculum and assessment requirements. Schools had little role in defining what features would be looked at and valued. The tone of the reports seemed to schools largely negative: positive features were treated as expected, while negative features were highlighted. Thus, even schools with mostly good results received reports that had a negative tinge, and what varied was the volume of negative comment. (p. 15)

Crooks goes on to assert that these audits and reviews, and the way that they were available to news media and the general public made them high stakes evaluations that engendered a sense of low trust of the ERO by schools. In addition, the media statements made by the Chief Reviewer in the mid to late 1990s added to this low trust environment. By the time we undertook our case studies, a new chief reviewer had been appointed and a new model for reviewing had been signalled and implemented. Coined the “assess and assist” model, it has its focus on educational outcomes for students and factors that directly relate to these and, with it, appears to have come a more trustful and positive image. Furthermore, we had a sense that teachers were in a phase of growing confidence about their curriculum decisions. That is, their professional development included making curriculum decisions on the basis of a combination of national documents and their own judgement, and the latter was coming to play a more important part in decisions.

The case study results also show how internal systems within these schools impacted on compliance matters. For example, performance management systems, which are required within teachers’ employment contracts, exert compliance in a number of ways. An example of the positive use of compliance was recorded at one of the secondary schools in our sample:

ERO (2002) noted that there was a need for more student-centred work based simply on seeing teachers in the front of classrooms. The AP pointed out that there had been an increased awareness of this issue and the need for a variety of teaching methods, but also, that some teaching styles needed extended observation to reveal what was really going on. It seemed to be structured in a way that provided order and routine, a variety of teaching methods and an overriding concern for the students to develop both personally and academically. [Fieldnotes for Si3]

One way of shifting this culture of teacher-dominated teaching methods was to change the appraisal system linked to professional development:

There was a new staff appraisal system in place and the appointment of a new AP added momentum to curriculum developments and working together. The school-wide PD
programme for staff in 2002 was on assessment practices. This programme utilised teams and group presentations to emphasis sharing and collaboration, and with the intention to maximise the longitudinal potential from all PD. This school was looking at working with other schools more to continue to improve curriculum provision. This process had begun through NCEA training days and such actions as using external reviewers for HOF (systems of management, delivering curriculum and teaching and learning). As a result of this review there was greater support at all levels for a change in the way Faculty heads were selected to focus more on curriculum rather than spiritual leadership qualities. [Fieldnotes for Si3]

Appraisal, as part of performance management, was reasonably prominent within the case studies. In almost every case, appraisal was linked with professional development and usually seen in a positive light by the teachers. For example:

Personal professional development of teachers is largely linked to their appraisal goals. Each teacher has individual professional development money allocated to them each year by the board. Teachers choose their own “critical friends” as appraisers and together they set goals and targets for future development based on the interim standards and their own needs/interests. [Fieldnotes for FP5]

Individual professional development for teachers is linked to the school’s appraisal system. Teachers are expected to set their own personal professional goals each year, which are then discussed with their appraiser (one of the three DPs). Once these goals are agreed upon, the teacher then approaches the principal for the financial support to attend a course or to buy a resource. As one of the teachers interviewed said, “The principal is really good. He encourages professional development. You just go through the PD courses book, decide what you want to go to and see him. He will approve or disapprove them.” [Fieldnotes for I2]

Compliance with internal policies
As signalled in the introduction to this compliance section, as well as external and internal policies, schools have also set up systems that require compliance by teachers for the implementation of curriculum. Sometimes these systems were based on a strategic decision about how the curriculum will be implemented at the school, while in others it appeared that misunderstandings about government or ERO requirements might be driving such systems. Examples of systems being designed and implemented by teachers strategically include such things as:

Providing the scaffold (clear policies, plans and guidelines) to make it easy for the staff to get on with the teaching and at the same time provide flexibility and scope to do what they need to do within the classroom. [deputy principal, Fieldnotes for FP6]

The DP, having only been at the school one year, stated that he was still “finding his way” in the management of curriculum. However, he stated that he had already introduced the school-wide long-term plan and the planning and assessment formats which the school was trialling with the aim of creating a more standardised system in these areas. The need for standardisation school-wide, he suggested, was for “monitoring purposes so that we can assure coverage and that all the objectives are being met.” [Fieldnotes for FP6]

We have an implementation plan in every curriculum area. We’re at the stage where we’ve got most areas covered. We’ve been going through them, last year and this year. They are set out in the same format. It started when I did the science. I did the format like that and we decided the next one that we’d do, we followed the same format. It just happened. It wasn’t a set format but now we like it like that. It says exactly what is required for this based on the curriculum.” [Teacher, Fieldnotes for FP7]

Plans are devised for each curriculum area. These documents are disseminated to staff in each of the Year group teams to guide their unit and lesson planning. In line with the National Administration Guidelines, emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy, especially in Years 1-4. In line with this, literacy and numeracy have a “director” to lead the area and there is a school structure, assessment policy and professional development in
each. The other curriculum areas are co-ordinated by a lead teacher and a curriculum team who are responsible for school-wide planning and information about professional development opportunities. [Fieldnotes for CP1]

In this way this school disseminated and supervised relatively uniform curriculum delivery and monitored its success through student achievement systems (for which there was a “director of student achievement”). Monitoring and checking to see that systems were being followed, both subtle and less so, were common. For example, many had checking or coverage sheets that regularly went to the senior management.

Examples of other types of systemisation were also seen at most of the schools in the sample. For example, syndicates and teams were used as a management and organisation device in almost every school.

A key function of the syndicates, as described by the same teacher is planning. While each syndicate completes it to different levels, it is based on the school curriculum guidelines that have been prepared to interpret, and support the implementation of each of the essential learning areas. Each teacher has a boxed set of these guidelines in their classroom and all of those interviewed referred to using them. [Fieldnotes for CP4]

The teams develop long-term plans for each term and then units for most areas except English and reading. The teams use the curriculum documents as a “structure” for their planning but they also pool “best practice” examples consistent with “cultural norms” or the “[school’s name] way.” In this forum, ideas could be “thrashed around” until an agreed understanding of what was to happen was reached. This shared understanding, in the principal's view, provided a framework for individual teacher curriculum implementation in line with their “own personal vision.” [Fieldnotes for CP5]

Another example of school-driven compliance included rules about such matters as timetabling and hours that should be spent on certain subjects. For example:

The first and second DP during an interview stated they felt, “Accountable for the learning within the school.” Their major focus is currently on maths and literacy. They have developed and implemented a generic curriculum policy and specific implementation plans and programmes for both of these curriculum areas. As one explained, “We’ve set the policy and practices in maths and literacy. We’ve told the teachers that they have to do an hour of maths every day and half an hour of instructional reading every day. That’s now in concrete, there are no options.” [Fieldnotes for I2]

On this sheet there is also an Estimated Guide to Weekly Programmes. This was developed by the principal and DP and provides teachers with guidelines as to how much time to spend on each area, each week. The suggestion is that teachers plan for seven hours and 30 minutes per week in English, five hours for maths, six hours for integrated curricula units, and four hours for specialist units. [Fieldnotes for CP3]

I think we are moving towards a separate maths and English policy with pretty structured guidelines and implementation requirements that are not negotiable, even down to how to deliver and for how long. [Principal, Fieldnotes for CP2]

From the data, however, it was not clear how these systems were monitored or whether they actually achieved what they set out to achieve.

The links between such systems of compliance and improved student achievement were not at all clear or even established in these case studies. The findings here imply that school self-management and social pressures enacted through national policies such as the 2001 Education Standards Act and performance management requirements are more likely to be driving these structures and systems. Further in-depth research in schools and classrooms is necessary to identify the impacts on learning and teaching. However, it might be argued
that the steps schools had taken to ensure accountability in planning and assessment would surely have contributed to well thought out classroom programmes and, therefore, better student learning.

6. Summary and conclusions

In conclusion, it appears that teachers in all the case study schools have found ways to successfully implement the new national curriculum and assessment requirements. Teachers had a generally positive approach to their work and expended huge amounts of effort in planning, teaching and assessment. Many teachers carried curriculum leadership responsibilities beyond their own classroom teaching, including aspects of school and curriculum management. Morale appeared high and the results shared with researchers indicated children at these schools were achieving well. The teachers gave us the impression that the curriculum had “settled in” and that they were innovative in designing systems and approaches to make the demands of the curriculum and external expectations manageable. Teacher confidence had increased since the earlier days of the recent curriculum statements, and in these case studies there is plenty of evidence of dedicated teachers working extremely hard to deliver effective classroom programmes.

This discussion, however, does not do justice to the huge amount of information contained in these case studies. Some themes, such as curriculum integration and reporting on curriculum outcomes, have been introduced here but barely discussed due to the limitations of time and space. Other themes, such as the inroads of private enterprise into schools through, for example, companies providing computers for at least one of these schools, the ways in which teachers implemented the curriculum with fee-paying students, and the impact on curriculum implementation of ICT have not been touched on in this report. Given further time and resources such areas of interest could also be explored.

Final word

The schools in this study were selected because they were regarded as schools that were already effectively implementing national curriculum. The case studies show considerable variations between schools in the way teachers and school leaders develop school and classroom programmes. Within schools, too, there were variations in the way different faculties, departments and syndicates work. Nevertheless, there were also broad similarities that mark out effectiveness.

In these effective schools, considerable importance was placed upon understanding and interpreting national curriculum documents and upon the national framework document as an overarching guide for broad school policy and direction. Curriculum statements were the basis of the writing of school plans and schemes (variously titled), and in turn more specific subject and classroom plans.

The research team was impressed with the commitment of the principals and teachers in these schools. Enormous efforts have been made to make connections between national curriculum, school plans and classroom plans and teaching and learning. In doing this, teachers have faced considerable challenges such as understanding the intentions of a new curriculum (via national statements) and reviewing and changing many aspects of their teaching. They have developed new forms of planning and assessment and reporting. They have adapted to new appraisal systems and accountability pressures to raise student achievement.
These case studies show the need for ongoing research and interaction between policy makers and teachers and school authorities to avoid possible misunderstandings about curriculum intentions, although how this is achieved needs further thought. There are many aspects of these schools that indicate effectiveness. In achieving effectiveness, however, there were costs that need to be analysed. There was evidence of extreme hard work by many teachers, and the researchers wondered whether some teachers might be in danger of burn-out. A challenge for schools was how to fit in an appropriate amount of the content (via achievement objectives) in the curriculum statements, rather than trying to cover all of it. Case study schools seemed to be making good progress in this matter; there was evidence of selecting content wisely, rather than trying to cover it all and thus, overcrowding their school programme. This is an example of an ongoing issue that would apply to other schools, again indicating the need for interaction between policy makers and schools. In these case study schools, there were indicators that showed that students were the beneficiaries of the considerable efforts being made for them by teachers to provide effective schooling.

Overall, there was a feeling among the researchers that schools have developed efficient systems of planning, assessment, use of resources, and recording and reporting student achievement; but perhaps the drive for efficient systems and target setting has gone beyond what it needs to. Perhaps there needs to be a “loosening” or reduction in the quest for better systems, a reduction in teachers’ paperwork, and a corresponding increase in the time teachers spend on teaching and learning processes in classrooms.
References


National Education Guidelines (Education Act 1989).


Appendix

Interview with principal/senior management team

1. In terms of the national curriculum, what do you want for students at your school?
   • Could you describe a student of whom you are particularly proud?
   • Could you give me an example?

2. What do you see as the ‘role’ of management in curriculum policy delivery?
   • What do you do, as principal, to implement the curriculum within the school?

3. What policies do you have in your school to implement the national curriculum at your school?
   • Can I please have a copy of………?

4. How were these policies developed?
   • What/who guided or helped you?
   • Why did you do it that way?
   • What problems/difficulties did you face developing/implementing them?
   • Why do you think they occurred?

5. When you go into classrooms, what sorts of things do you want/expect to see happening?

6. What systems are in place to ensure that this happens? (for example, professional development; expert teacher supervision, etc?)

7. How /Do you see your vision for your students linked to the NZCF?

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about curriculum translation and implementation in your school? (national/local issues, etc.)

Interview with classroom teacher(s)

1. What do you want the national curriculum to deliver to students in your classroom?
   • Could you describe a student of whom you are particularly proud?
   • Could you give me an example?

2. What do you see as your role in the implementation of school policy and curriculum delivery?

3. How do you go about long term planning?

4. How do you go about unit planning?

5. How do you go about lesson planning?
6. How do your plans link to the national curriculum documents and school policies?

7. What purposes do your written plans serve?

8. What support have you/do you receive? (for example, external, internal, professional development, resources, etc)

9. What helps you to plan? To teach?

10. What hinders your planning/teaching?

11. How do you assess students?

12. We’re really interested in what teachers “do.” Could you tell me about a recent unit/lesson that you planned and taught that you were really pleased with? What did you do?
   - What did the children do?
   - Why were you really pleased with this lesson/unit?
Letter to principals

The Principal
school
address

Dear ________.

Thank you for agreeing to our request to use school as a case study school in our National Sampling Survey research. Enclosed is an information sheet about the project, a consent form and four interview schedules, which I will use as appropriate in carrying out the case study in your school. As arranged by phone and e-mail, I will be at your school to carry out the research on date._______________________

It would be helpful if you could distribute copies of the information sheet, consent form and applicable questionnaire to the appropriate curriculum management people and syndicate leaders (if they are involved with curriculum planning) in your school as soon as possible and ask them to bring them with them when they meet with me. This will give them some idea of why I am there and the sort of information I am seeking. I will be bringing a small tape recorder so that I can record the interviews as a memory aid!!

It would also be helpful if you gave some thought to nominating one (or two at the most) teachers whom you consider to be effective in implementing the curriculum in the classroom, gave them the appropriate documentation and asked them when would be a suitable time for me to observe a lesson. I would also like to interview this/these teacher/s.

You may also deem it appropriate to inform your Board of Trustees and gain informed consent for this project from a representative of the board. Once again, many thanks for your assistance with this project. If there are any other details I should know about in advance, please e-mail or phone me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

Researcher
The University of Waikato – Te Whare Wananga o Waikato

School of Education – Te Kura Toi Tangata

An Exploratory Study in School, Teacher and Student Views about Curriculum Implementation

Information for Prospective Participants

The Study
The Curriculum Stocktake: National School Sampling Study is a research project by the University of Waikato for the Ministry of Education. In 2001 and 2002, the project developed and administered national questionnaires, which sampled 10% of New Zealand schools. The questionnaires sought information from teachers about their views and experiences in implementing the national curriculum which has been progressively developed since 1992.

The case study section of the National School Sampling Survey project aims to study in more detail than the questionnaires, principal’s and teacher’s views and experiences in implementing the national curriculum.

Your Contribution
If you agree to take part in this study, you may be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews, and/or in-class observations during the course of the study. You will be asked to identify your experiences and views on implementing the curriculum and, in particular, the practices that have been effective for you as well as some of the difficulties you are experiencing. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Use of the Information Collected
Information will be securely stored throughout the study. Your confidentiality will be respected at all times. Your identity will not be revealed in any published documents. You will have the opportunity to view the data that you have provided and amend or withdraw any data which you have provided and which you do not want to have included. Data and data analysis will be used for the National School Sampling Survey Milestone Reports and other articles and papers. Data, which are no longer required, will be destroyed within three years.
Confidentiality
Neither you nor your school will be identified by name, nor by descriptions that could identify you. Where you are referred to in the transcripts a code name will be used. Off the record, or private communication will be kept confidential. Personal information will not be revealed to others.

Declaration
If you take part in this study, you have the right to:
Refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time.
Ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation
Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

If at any stage you have concerns about the research you may discuss these with Professor Clive McGee.

Research Director
Professor Clive McGee
Telephone: 838-4500 Ext. 7711
Email: mcgee@waikato.ac.nz
I understand that participation in this research project will involve the following:

1. I will be involved in a case study project entitled, An Exploratory Study in School, Teacher and Student Views about Curriculum Implementation.
2. Data gathered from this research will not be made available to any party outside the Ministry of Education Curriculum Stocktake project and I will be subject to the provisions of the New Zealand Privacy Act (1993).
3. I will not be identified in any way other than a code number or pseudonym in data records or reports of the research findings.
4. I may withdraw from parts of this study at any stage, and if I wish I may withdraw from the project completely.
5. If I have any concerns about my participation in this research project I may approach the Research Director, Professor Clive McGee.

Signed..............................................................

Name (please print)..........................

Date......................................................

Contact phone number...........................