School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why

Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES]

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School Leadership Cases
This report is one of a series of best evidence synthesis iterations (BESs) commissioned by the Ministry of Education. The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme is seeking to support collaborative knowledge building and use across policy, research, and practice in education. This series of syntheses draws together bodies of research evidence to explain what works and why to improve valued education outcomes and to make a bigger difference for the education of all our children and young people. Each synthesis celebrates the work of educators and the inquiry processes that enable educators and researchers to bring about sustainable improvements in education. Each is part of an iterative process that anticipates future research and development informing educational practice.

Earlier BESs have focused on effective teaching and professional learning in schools and on the impact of family and community influences on educational outcomes. This *School Leadership and Student Outcomes BES* will prove a crucial support for school leaders as they address our shared challenge of preparing all our children for the future.

The International Academy of Education has commissioned summaries of the recent BESs developed by the Ministry of Education. While the full reports provide the explanations and vignettes that are needed to support educational change, these short summaries will also be a convenient help for leaders. They will be available on the International Academy of Education website www.iaed.org and on the UNESCO website http://unesdoc.unesco.org The first of these summaries to be published is:


Further information is available at www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/BES, and feedback is welcome at best.evidence@minedu.govt.nz
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School leadership cases for professional learning

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In this section, we present six cases that demonstrate how combinations of the various leadership dimensions (chapters 5 and 6) and associated knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSDs, Chapter 8) work together in the accomplishment of important leadership tasks. The cases have been selected to show leadership in action across a range of different school and policy contexts. They provide additional insights into the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of each dimension and its associated KSDs.

Wherever possible, New Zealand cases were selected. Case 3, from the US, shows the difference that pedagogical knowledge makes to administrative decision making. It was selected because a New Zealand equivalent does not currently exist.

Each case is an accurate representation of the research on which it is based, though much of the content has been rearranged to provide clear links to the dimensions and the KSDs. New tables and figures have also been constructed to make the cases more suitable for professional development purposes.

The questions for reflection at the end of each case are designed to help readers draw on its key features to make links back to their own practice. References are provided for those who wish to do additional reading.

Table 22 is a guide to using the cases for professional development purposes. It lists the dimensions and associated KSDs discussed in each case and the leadership tasks for which the material in the case is likely to be most relevant.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Leadership dimensions discussed</th>
<th>Leadership KSDs discussed</th>
<th>Relevance to leadership tasks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leading teacher appraisal</td>
<td>Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum</td>
<td>Teacher appraisal; formative evaluation of teaching; classroom observation; design of policies and procedures for the above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing goals and expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selecting, developing, and using smart tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. An assistant principal improves teaching in her school</td>
<td>Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development</td>
<td>Engage in open-to-learning conversations</td>
<td>Any task involving the improvement of teaching and learning through interpretation and use of data; leadership of change; conversations with teachers about the need for change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engaging in constructive problem talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. A principal uses pedagogical knowledge to lead teacher learning for student success</td>
<td>Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development</td>
<td>Ensure administrative decisions are informed by knowledge about effective pedagogy</td>
<td>Promoting effective teaching in diverse classrooms; decision making about grouping</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensure administrative decisions are informed by knowledge about effective pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A literacy initiative in a kura</td>
<td>Establishing goals and expectations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resourcing strategically</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating educationally powerful connections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A senior management team creates educational connections between school and home</td>
<td>Creating educationally powerful connections</td>
<td>Build relational trust</td>
<td>School–home partnerships; involving parents in curricula; accessing home resources to reduce disparity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Leadership through the selection and design of smart tools</td>
<td>Selecting, developing, and using smart tools</td>
<td>Design of all national and local educational policies intended to change practice, especially curricula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leading teacher appraisal

**Introduction**

Appraisal is a performance management process aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. It typically involves (i) identification of performance expectations and appraisal goals, (ii) classroom observations, (iii) teacher self-appraisal, (iv) discussion of the teacher’s self-appraisal and the appraiser’s evaluation, and (v) the setting of new performance goals.

Leaders at different levels of the education system have responsibility for the quality of appraisal: policy makers set national guidelines; school management teams and boards of trustees develop and approve school policies and procedures. If appraisal is to achieve its aim of improving teaching and learning, it should not function as a compliance-based evaluation of teaching. Instead, it should be an opportunity for leaders and teachers to inquire together into the impact of teaching on student learning.

Much of the New Zealand literature reviewed in Chapter 6 showed that data-based inquiry into the relationship between what is taught and what is learned impacts positively on student achievement. This case describes how a researcher conducted a series of studies to determine if the appraisal policies and procedures operating in primary schools are encouraging inquiry of this kind. She found that educational policy makers and school leaders play a crucial role in determining whether they do.

In this case, we identify three leadership dimensions that influence the extent to which appraisal is used as a tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning:

- Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum;
- Establishing goals and expectations;
- Selecting, developing and using smart tools.

**Research context**

Three related studies investigated the appraisal policies and practices of Auckland primary and intermediate schools:

**Study 1** investigated what teachers talk about in their appraisal discussions. Eleven teachers (four appraisers and seven appraisees) from three schools were questioned about their most recent appraisal discussions. The schools ranged in size from 358 to 695 students. Two were decile 10 and the third was decile 3.

**Study 2** established the extent to which appraisal goals, jointly developed by appraisers and teachers, focused on data-based inquiry into student learning. The findings were based on the responses of 68 teachers from eight primary and intermediate schools to a questionnaire about their appraisal goals.

17 primary schools were involved in **study 3**, which investigated (i) the emphasis on student learning in appraisal policies and (ii) performance indicators developed to assess staff against professional standards. The schools were located in four Auckland regions and included year 1–6, year 1–8, and year 7–8 schools. Their rolls ranged in size from 200 to 1000, and the decile level from 1 to 10.

**Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum**

In Chapter 5, we found strong evidence that a leader’s ability to encourage teachers to use student data as a basis for evaluating their teaching is critical to improving student outcomes. Appraisal discussions are a prime time for such evaluation.

**What do teachers talk about during appraisal discussions?**

Of the 11 teachers interviewed about their appraisal discussions, only one described a conversation that focused specifically on student learning. Three others reported talking about student learning, but only in general terms. They did not discuss either the specifics of what students had learned or the relationship between what was learned and what had been taught. For example, one teacher said she had mentioned that a lesson was really pleasing because “… the art work came out how we wanted it to look”. Another recalled talking about “improved numeracy skills” and “children … making progress”.

Leadership dimension 3
With limited emphasis on student learning, teachers had few opportunities to engage in evidence-based inquiry into the relationship between how they had taught and what had been learned. Appraisal discussions focused instead on classroom teaching or organisation. All 11 teachers reported discussing teaching approaches, strategies, and techniques (planning, questioning, using resources, managing student behaviour, preparing lessons, modelling, organising the classroom, organising school events, grouping students, etc.). They also discussed various personal qualities, traits, or characteristics (such as confidence, willingness to learn, and openness to new ideas). The relationship between such qualities and student learning was not considered. Furthermore, when describing their appraisal interviews, teachers attached particular weight to the affective dimension; most talked about the positive feelings generated: “It gave me confidence”, “It made me feel really good”.

The evidence reviewed above shows that appraisal, as practised in these schools, was not being used for data-based inquiry into student learning. By focusing primarily on teacher behaviour and not exploring its impact on student learning, appraisal was not fulfilling its potential to foster student success.

Establishing goals and expectations

In chapters 5 and 6, we discussed the importance of setting and communicating goals for teacher and student learning. In the context of appraisal, ‘development objectives’ or ‘appraisal goals’ are agreed on by the teacher and appraiser at the start of each appraisal cycle and then provide the basis for subsequent observations and discussion.

There are two leadership roles in the goal-setting process. First, appraisers exercise leadership as they work with teachers to develop clear and specific goals, which, if they are to promote student learning, must emphasise achievement outcomes and be embedded in classroom routines. Second, principals and senior managers exercise leadership as they support appraisers and teachers in using evidence about student performance as the basis for goal setting.

Appraisal goals

The lack of emphasis on student learning in appraisal discussions does not mean that the teachers were unconcerned about student learning or that they did not want their teaching to have greater impact. Indeed, nearly all responded positively to the researcher’s suggestion that they focus on data about student learning during appraisal discussions:

I think that’s great … so you’re using hard data of learning to then get the teacher to focus in on their teaching practice.

I actually really enjoy getting that kind of feedback.

It would be useful ‘cause that’s what we’re here for, ‘cause that’s what really matters.

Rather, the explanation for the limited focus on student learning lies in the nature of the goals that were developed by the teachers and appraisers. Only three of the 11 teachers had developed goals that were directly related to student learning. Most goals focused only on what was taught, because it was assumed that certain teaching practices would automatically advance learning. One teacher, who had a goal relating to social studies planning and decision making, reported that her appraisal discussion had centred on how she and her team had investigated and implemented learning centres, graphic organisers, and cooperative learning. Her comments reveal big assumptions about the impact of particular teaching practices on students:

… ‘cause this one [goal] is all about planning, and planning affects students’ learning. ‘Cause planning obviously, you know, it must, it must connect with the students’ learning ‘cause it’s part of that planning, learning, assessment, teaching cycle.

These findings were confirmed and extended by study 2, which asked 68 teachers in eight primary and intermediate schools about their appraisal goals. The vast majority of goals (90%) focused on aspects of teaching such as implementing a new arts curriculum, supporting teacher aides with an autistic student, or maintaining a student-focused classroom environment.

Only 11 (4.5%) of the 244 goals identified by teachers were about student learning. These included:

- develop independent learners;
- developing literacy in year 1;
- upskill all the children in my class in the use of ICT;
- improve numeracy skills and teaching and numeracy thru [sic] NUMP;
- upskill literacy at year 1 and 2 level (reading/writing);
- improve written language throughout whole school (school-wide goal).
Most of the goals in this group were expressed in general terms, so it was not clear what would count as ‘goal achieved’. Even though their focus was on enhancing learning outcomes, the extent of improvement was wide open to interpretation.

Fewer than 4% of all goals emphasised inquiry, and none specified the use of data.

A learning goal is a necessary but insufficient condition for improving student outcomes: goals must also be specific and challenging. The small number of goals that focused on student outcomes, and the vague, unchallenging nature of those that did, in large measure explains why the teachers in this study did not inquire into student learning during their appraisal discussions. Indeed, what emerges is a picture of appraisal as a process for helping teachers to engage in practices that are assumed to be beneficial for students, rather than an opportunity for inquiring into the teaching-learning relationship.

Selecting, developing, and using smart tools

In Chapter 6, we identified the role smart tools play in the improvement of teaching and learning. The appraisal policies and supporting documents that schools develop as part of their performance management systems can be such smart tools, influencing every aspect of the appraisal process: goal setting, classroom observations, self-appraisal, and appraisal discussions/interviews.

It is the role of leadership to ensure that appraisal tools are aligned to the core aim of improving teaching quality and student learning. In keeping with a distributed conception of leadership, there are opportunities for alignment at every level of the system, including boards of trustees, where board and principal determine school policy, and senior management, where principal and senior managers develop the supporting documents (performance indicators and appraisal templates)—all of which have a powerful influence on how appraisal is conducted.

Appraisal tools

The second explanation for the lack of emphasis on student learning in appraisal discussions concerns the tools used to guide the process. When asked why they did not discuss student learning during their appraisal interviews, teachers said that:

- they thought that the purpose of appraisal was to evaluate their teaching, not to develop their ability to promote student learning;
- they assumed that there was a connection between certain teaching practices and student success;
- they discussed student learning in other contexts;
- they viewed appraisal as an opportunity to celebrate teacher success and provide support.

These reasons centre on the teachers’ views of the purposes of appraisal and their assumptions about effective teaching. One way in which leaders can use appraisal to promote data-based inquiry is to ensure that appraisal tools are designed to challenge assumptions about effective teaching and develop teachers’ capacity to inquire into the impact of their teaching.

Study 3 investigated what emphasis there was on student learning in three appraisal tools: school policy statements, performance indicators, and appraisal templates. The findings demonstrate the potential of tools to promote data-based inquiry into student learning.
Tools of appraisal

A. School policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership role</th>
<th>Potential for promoting inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Each board of trustees</strong> approves an appraisal policy that is consistent with Ministry of Education guidelines.</td>
<td><strong>Strong</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy focuses on the improvement of teaching and learning:</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To improve the quality of student learning through classroom observation and analysis of classroom processes”;</td>
<td>Policy includes, but does not emphasise the improvement of teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To enable staff to improve teaching effectiveness and enhance student achievement.”</td>
<td>Policy emphasises completion of appraisal processes (a compliance approach).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy emphasises that the appraisal process should focus on data-informed inquiry into the relationship between teaching and learning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Findings.** Seventeen schools of varying size and socio-economic status submitted their appraisal policy documents for analysis. Of the statements specifying purpose, only 15% referred to student learning, while 70% made reference to teaching. Once again, the assumption appeared to be that a focus on teaching would be beneficial for students.

B. Performance indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership role</th>
<th>Potential for promoting inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School leaders</strong> include performance indicators in appraisal policies to guide classroom observations and discussions. Indicators are based on the national interim Professional Standards.</td>
<td><strong>Strong</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By asking which students are succeeding, indicators require the assessor to investigate student outcomes, for example:</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Demonstrates appropriate emphasis and successful learning in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics”;</td>
<td>Indicators assume a causal link between certain teaching behaviours and improved student outcomes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Students are achieving success.”</td>
<td>“Demonstrates an attractive, busy, and challenging physical environment that promotes student achievement and further learning across the curriculum.”</td>
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</table>

**Findings.** Only 3% of the performance indicators from the 17 schools (all from just six schools) focused directly on student learning and encouraged evidence-based inquiry by raising questions about student success. A further 3% of indicators (from eight schools) focused indirectly on student learning. This latter group of indicators reflected the assumption that certain teaching behaviours will inevitably improve student outcomes. The remaining indicators focused on dimensions of professional knowledge, teaching techniques, motivation of students, classroom management, and communication.

C. Templates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership role</th>
<th>Potential for promoting inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Templates</strong> are developed by <strong>school principals and senior managers</strong>. They provide frameworks for classroom observations and follow-up discussion.</td>
<td><strong>Strong</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templates prompt appraisers to focus on the teaching–learning relationship and to record and consider student learning data.</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Template headings are general and do not require or encourage a focus on student learning. For instance:</td>
<td>Describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things seen</td>
<td>Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things heard</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings.** There was no reason appraisers could not record data and comments about student learning on the templates. But the generic headings neither required or encouraged them to do so. Under the heading ‘Impact’, one assessor recorded notes about the impact of teaching on students’ behaviour, not on learning outcomes. Student engagement, interest, and motivation were assumed to be indicators of cognitive engagement and achievement, and formed the basis of subsequent discussion. Leaders play a key role in determining the extent to which appraisal is used as a process for enhancing student outcomes. They can ensure that appraisal tools—national and school policies, performance indicators, and appraisal templates—are aligned to the goal of improving teaching and learning. They can do this by selecting, developing, and using tools that require and support inquiry into the relationship between what teachers do and student achievement and well-being. Given the highly contextual nature of teaching, appraisal tools should not reinforce the assumption that particular teaching practices will inevitably impact positively on student learning. This study found that the appraisal tools used by the schools fostered assumptions about, rather than inquiry into, the impact of teaching on students.
| Key questions | 1. Do your school’s appraisal policies and performance indicators require appraisers and teachers to use evidence about student learning as a basis for appraisal?  
2. What are appraisal goals in your school based on? Do they arise out of an inquiry cycle in which evidence is analysed and student needs discussed?  
3. What professional development might you design to help teachers and appraisers learn how to use student data to inquire into their teaching practice? (Refer to Case 3, page 226). |
An assistant principal improves teaching in her school

This case describes how an assistant principal contributed to student achievement by providing her staff with professional learning in the use of achievement data to improve reading and writing. Although her teachers were collecting achievement data—diagnostic summaries for individual students (based on norm-referenced tests) and reading tracking sheets—the AP believed they were not using it to inform their teaching. She tried two approaches (one unsuccessful, the other successful) to encourage them to do so. The case highlights how important it is, when leading change, to discover the beliefs and assumptions that explain current practice and teacher reactions to proposed alternatives.

The study took place in a large South Auckland primary school with a high percentage of Māori and Pasifika students. Although the school had participated in a government-funded initiative to improve literacy, no improvement was discerned. The AP, who was responsible for literacy leadership in the junior school, asked a researcher to work with her for a year to help teachers learn how to use student achievement data to improve their teaching. The researcher and an assistant observed four staff meetings chaired by the AP and attended by seven teachers. After each meeting, the researchers interviewed three or four teachers and relayed their feedback to the AP so that she could take it into account when planning the next stage of the intervention. By the end of the year, the students of the participating teachers had doubled their writing vocabulary. In the second year, when the focus shifted to reading, there were significant improvements in student reading levels.

Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development

Generally speaking, leaders make their most powerful impact on student outcomes through their leadership of teacher learning and development, and much of this impact comes down to how successfully they establish the conditions for effective professional learning communities. In Chapter 6, we identified two such conditions: an intensive focus on the teaching–learning relationship and collective responsibility for student achievement and well-being. Leaders of team, departmental, and syndicate meetings can strengthen these conditions by:

- focusing teacher talk on the teaching–achievement relationship;
- using outcomes data to determine effective teaching practice;
- fostering collective responsibility and accountability for student learning and well-being;
- sharing effective teaching practices and creating opportunities for teachers to learn from each other.

Supported by the researcher, the AP in this case worked with her teachers to develop a shared understanding of how to improve the low literacy levels.

Engaging in constructive problem talk

When a proposed change challenges teachers’ existing beliefs and practices, leaders are more effective when they discover and discuss those beliefs than when they ignore them (Chapter 6). This case clearly contrasts these two different approaches.

1. A first, unsuccessful effort to create a learning community

Bypassing teachers’ theories of action

The AP wanted teachers to use the data they had collected about their students’ reading as a basis for their planning. She believed that these data (from the Observation Survey and tracking sheets) were the most reliable evidence available and that, by using them, teachers could better align their lessons with the learning needs of their students, leading to enhanced achievement.

The teachers disagreed. They preferred to base their planning on their own, anecdotal observations. They believed that these were more relevant and trustworthy than formal data. In fact, two of three teachers interviewed explained that they did not even look at the formal data that they personally collected:

Teacher 1: They [Observation Survey data] go into the file but you don’t have time to look at it.
Teacher 2: I don’t use it [tracking sheet] very often—just fill it in.

The AP believed that the teachers were dismissive of the formal data for two reasons:

- They did not realise its potential to help them improve their teaching.
- They did not ‘own’ it.

Her challenge, therefore, was to help them appreciate its value. With this aim in mind, she presented graphs of Observation Survey data at a team meeting and pointed out how their students were achieving in relation to national benchmarks.

When asked by the researchers for feedback on the value of this presentation, the teachers generally agreed that it had not been very helpful. They already knew that many of their students were reading below expectations, and they believed that this was largely due to contextual factors that were beyond their control. They suggested that national expectations were unrealistic for their students.

Teacher 1: I don’t know if I agree on the national averages … There’s the ones that don’t come to school every day, there’s the ones who don’t have lunch, there’s the ones who are scared when they come to school so they are running round and they’re scared when they go home because they won’t do their books at home.

Teacher 2: I’ve got a vague idea off the top of my head and I just tend to teach them the best I can and I mean if they’re below and I’m teaching as much as I can and to the best of my ability—I don’t see that knowing exactly where they should be, or how much below they are, is going to do anything.

Why were initial efforts to create a learning community largely unsuccessful?

The initial team meeting highlighted a mismatch between the AP’s and teachers’ assumptions about low achievement and what to do about it. As the diagram shows, the AP’s theory of action bypassed rather than engaged the teachers’ theories of action; the result was resistance.

The AP’s attempt to make the issue (low student achievement) explicit by graphing the data did not increase the teachers’ ownership of the problem because they did not trust the data, nor did they believe that they could make a bigger difference to student achievement. As the AP bypassed rather than engaged these beliefs, nothing changed for either teachers or students.
2. A second, successful effort to create a learning community

**Engaging with teachers’ theories of action**

After discussions with the researchers, the AP decided to make the relationship between teaching and student achievement more explicit. She would challenge the teachers’ view that their students’ literacy was constrained by factors beyond their control. At the next team meeting, she presented results from two sub-tests of the Observation Survey. These showed that, while the students’ ability to hear and record sounds in words approached national norms, their writing vocabulary was falling far behind. In this way, the AP challenged the teachers’ theories, not by directly confronting them, but by giving them a means of testing their validity. She then worked with the teachers to identify why the students’ word-writing scores were so low and asked them to consider teaching strategies that might improve them.

The discussion at this meeting was very different from the discussion at the previous meeting. While the teachers still struggled to grasp the meaning of the data, they adopted a problem-solving approach this time. For example, one teacher, struggling with the discrepancy revealed by the data, said, “I don’t understand why—they’re hearing and recording sounds—and they can’t link it to the writing vocab.”

Teachers continued to express doubts about whether national benchmarks were realistic for their students. But they now expressed these doubts in ways that could be more constructively challenged in terms of teaching practice.

Teacher: … writing the words for themselves, they will never be able to do the work by themselves.

Assistant Principal: [After one year at school] … they need to write more words and it is about how do we help them to do that?

The teachers agreed on some strategies they could use to help their students use their letter-level knowledge to write words.

**Agreed evaluation of existing practice**

Despite agreeing to use the new strategies, some teachers still doubted this would improve student achievement. For example, one teacher suggested that progress was unlikely until students “achieved a certain stage in development”. To evaluate the effectiveness of the new strategies, the AP suggested that, once each week, the teachers should ask their students to write as many words as they could in five minutes. A month later, the AP collected the data and graphed the difference between the first and second scores for a random sample of students from each class. The graphs showed that the students in some classes made only small gains, while the students in others made large gains. The AP shared these results with her teachers at a team meeting. The group noted that one of their number was particularly successful in raising their students’ achievement. The others were very keen to discuss the strategies used by this teacher.

**Improved practice**

The final round of interviews revealed three key changes in teaching practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data-based inquiry</td>
<td>I’ve never really looked at the Observation Survey data before so I didn’t really know that it was a problem … You know the performance was actually below average. It didn’t click with me that those were the strategies we should be using. Once we started putting strategies into place, we could see it working. (Teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based practices</td>
<td>Teachers described how they now contextualised the teaching of words in their reading and writing programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased expectations</td>
<td>One teacher described how, while writing five words was acceptable to her before, she now expected 30.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evidence collected by the teachers suggested that the changes they made were effective in improving student outcomes. The students’ three-monthly test scores improved considerably. Teachers also reported anecdotal evidence of greater word use in student stories and greater student independence in trying new words.
A follow-up visit to a team meeting one year later showed that the norms and content of team meetings had changed, with the focus now on helping teachers teach particular students more effectively. The teachers plotted each student’s text-reading level on a nationally benchmarked graph that was colour-coded so that students’ teachers could be readily identified:

The teachers then discussed how to progress those who had failed to reach that quarter’s benchmark. They agreed that it was helpful to be able to identify students they should target and strategies they could use to improve achievement. One teacher explained:

“You can identify where you need to put more effort in … We all support each other—we ask, ‘Hey, what are you doing to get yours [text levels] up?’ and ‘What do we need to do?’”

A noticeable shift had occurred in the course of the year. The teachers now focused on what they could do to assist struggling students to reach national benchmarks. The use of student data helped promote inquiry into the teaching–learning relationship. The diagram below summarises this second, more successful change strategy. With the help of the external research partner, the AP had revised her theory about how to promote change. With the help of the AP, the teachers had tested and revised their theories about the usefulness of data—and what they could achieve with their students.
Creating a learning community

These findings illustrate the conditions that contribute to the creation of a learning community. By challenging her teachers’ beliefs about the use of student data and their low expectations in terms of student achievement and by simultaneously helping them develop relevant knowledge and skills, the AP was able to create a community focused on learning to improve student performance. A summary of her strategies follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>What happened as a result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shift the focus from discussion of students to discussion of the teaching–achievement relationship</td>
<td>The meetings were organised as opportunities to discuss the links between teaching and student achievement. This discussion was supported by relevant achievement data and the AP’s ability to challenge the teachers’ low expectations and their tendency to attribute poor student performance to external factors. They began to focus instead on classroom factors that were within their control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use student outcomes data to inform decisions about effective teaching practice</td>
<td>The AP created multiple opportunities for the teachers to make connections between their teaching and their students’ learning (for example, by identifying the problem with the word-writing scores and getting teachers to agree to track progress). Utilising these opportunities, the teachers were able to test their original beliefs about what they could influence and what their students could achieve. As they learned to use student outcome data to distinguish between more and less effective practices, they started discussing how they might change their teaching in order to raise achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actively foster collective responsibility by sharing effective teaching practice and creating opportunities for teachers to learn from one another</td>
<td>By setting up opportunities for group discussion of data, the AP helped create an atmosphere of shared responsibility and accountability. In this changed environment, the needs of low-achieving students could be identified and addressed and colleagues who were using more successful teaching practices could be identified.</td>
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Key questions

1. Think of an aspect of teachers’ practice that you would like to change. How might you find out what beliefs underpin that practice?
2. How do you explain the consequences that flow from engaging or bypassing teachers’ theories of action?
3. How is student achievement data currently used by teachers in your school, department, or team? Do leaders and teachers agree that current practice is satisfactory? If not, how might you make your differing views the subject of professional discussion?

Source


Further reading


A principal uses pedagogical knowledge to lead teacher learning for student success

Introduction

- What do school leaders need to know in order to support teachers in improving student outcomes?
- How are the management decisions that leaders make on matters such as student grouping, timetabling, and assessment influenced by their knowledge of the discipline concerned and how to teach it effectively?

In this case, we explore the experiences of a primary school principal, Mr Nash, who used his knowledge of mathematics teaching and learning to transform a management issue (student grouping) into an opportunity for teacher professional learning. While it is about a primary principal, we believe the case has relevance for any curriculum leader, primary or secondary.

Nash believed the introduction of a new mathematics curriculum provided an excellent opportunity to critically examine the current policy of separating students into maths ability groups. The principal had clear, and largely sceptical, views about ability grouping. Initially, he didn’t share these views with his teachers because he wanted them to consider the issue for themselves. He designed two activities that would help his staff to explore their ideas about grouping and connect these ideas to their own practice:

Activity 1: A discussion, led by himself, of an article describing the implications of heterogeneous grouping for the teaching and learning of mathematics.

Activity 2: A group task in which the staff explored a mathematics word problem that he had designed.

Research context

Nash was one of five principals involved in a study of how school management practices such as student grouping are influenced by changes in leaders’ knowledge of subjects and how to teach them. All five were leading schools that were involved in a national initiative to improve the teaching of mathematics. As part of this initiative, principals participated in a series of workshops. This case concerns just one of the five principals and focuses on how his pedagogical leadership was shaped by his knowledge of mathematics and mathematics teaching.

Nash’s school was a small, high-decile primary school. At the time of the study, he had been principal for five years. His own early experience of learning mathematics had largely involved mastering the basic facts and procedures for calculation, with a reliance on memorisation. After “getting stumped” by Algebra II, he didn’t pursue tertiary mathematics any further. But his knowledge of mathematics did advance to the conceptual level—the point at which he was able to make sense of mathematical ideas and processes—when he first began teaching. He noted:

> When I first started teaching at the primary level, and had to teach mathematics for the first time … I really became interested in it and excited about it … I was seeing the patterns and making connections, and thinking about how a system of knowledge … is put together and how different people put that together.

Nash’s knowledge of elementary mathematics and his ideas about how children constructed mathematical knowledge shaped many aspects of his pedagogical leadership. Added to this, he had a commitment to equity in education and an awareness of how educational practices can advantage some students and disadvantage others.
Leadership dimension 4

Knowledge, skills and dispositions—leadership content knowledge

In Chapter 8, we defined leadership content knowledge as that knowledge of teaching and learning that shapes management practices. The leadership content knowledge that shaped Nash’s approach to student grouping included:

- knowledge of the discipline of mathematics;
- knowledge of how to promote teacher learning about the teaching of mathematics;
- knowledge of diverse learners and how diversity can promote learning in mathematics classes.

This knowledge enabled Nash to help his teachers better understand the issues around heterogeneous grouping in mathematics. When leaders are actively involved with their teachers in both formal and informal professional learning, there is evidence of greater impacts on student outcomes. This leadership dimension had the greatest impact of all the dimensions identified in this BES.

Nash’s active involvement included:

- leading staff discussions about teaching and learning;
- being an accessible and knowledgeable source of advice on teaching.

Below, we discuss the two activities Nash used to lead the professional learning of his staff.

Activity 1: Discussion

Nash’s goal was to provide his staff with concrete examples of maths teaching that was effective with diverse learners. In a staff meeting, he used an article in which a teacher described two examples of mixed-ability grouping in her grade 5 (year 5) maths class:

“The teacher, Mrs Riddle was concerned that the most competent children in her mixed ability math class found it ‘too easy’ and were missing some of the intellectual richness that mathematics had to offer. She tells the story of the developing partnership between two children in her fifth-grade mathematics class who she had paired together to solve a complex math problem: Nate a ‘math star’ who could solve maths problems quickly and Brian who struggled in math, but was a strong visual learner. Working together, the students were able to combine Nate’s flexible sense of how to work with numbers with Brian’s concrete and visual sense of what the problem actually meant. As Nate slowed down and tried to understand what Brian was doing, he discovered conceptual depths to the mathematics that he had not considered before.”

To guide the teachers’ reading of the article, Nash gave them a series of questions. These were designed to encourage them to explore and develop their own ideas and to give him insight into their thinking. The questions reflected Nash’s own knowledge about effective teaching for diverse learners and his beliefs about student grouping.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The questions</th>
<th>How the questions worked</th>
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<td>What are Riddle’s underlying assumptions—that appear either explicitly or implicitly in her text—about why ‘stars’ and ‘less able’ students are best served by working with each other rather than separately? Which of the experiences Riddle reports appear to confirm her assumptions?</td>
<td>Drew attention to the assumptions underlying the idea that it is good for students of mixed abilities to work together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>According to Riddle, what mathematical skills are often not evident in maths ‘stars’? What are the competencies she appears most interested in developing in her students?</td>
<td>Introduced the idea that the criteria teachers use to identify students who excel at maths might mask what these students do and do not know.</td>
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<td>How would you characterise the teaching practices that Riddle promotes for heterogeneous maths classrooms? What knowledge and know-how are essential for someone to teach the way that Riddle teaches?</td>
<td>Highlighted the idea that teachers require specific skills and knowledge to teach heterogeneous classes well.</td>
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In the staff meeting, each teacher wrote individual responses to the questions and then shared their thoughts with the rest of the group. They identified Riddle as a teacher who was highly reflective, knew her students’ abilities, built upon their strengths, and was able to deepen their conceptual understanding. The teachers wanted to know how Nate became stimulated by Brian’s thinking and how to address the different pace at which students worked. The teachers also questioned the extent to which student achievement gains were a product of thoughtful teaching or ability grouping.

The teachers’ responses to the article suggest that it had clearly worked in the ways that Nash intended: it gave them the opportunity to discuss important ideas about heterogeneous grouping for mathematics and to consider its pedagogical implications. In the next section, we explore how the principal’s pedagogical content knowledge enabled him to lead this learning opportunity for his teachers.

**Principal knowledge and skills to promote teacher learning**

**Knowledge of the discipline**

Nash knew that mathematical problem solving is multi-dimensional, requiring the use of a variety of cognitive processes and skills: conceptual understandings, concrete and numerical representations, calculation procedures, etc. This knowledge enabled him to select an article that contained important ideas about teaching mixed-ability classes—and put them across in ways that teachers would find accessible and transferable to their own practice. The article:

- highlighted some of the advantages of mixed-ability groupings by illustrating how students with different strengths can learn from each other;
- provided a window into how teachers’ orientation toward mathematics, attention to students’ mathematical thinking, and creative approaches support the learning of diverse students.

Nash also drew on his knowledge of the discipline to develop questions that would focus attention on the diverse skills that students bring to maths problems.

**Knowledge of how to promote teacher learning**

The principal knew that ideas about mathematics and mathematics teaching are embedded in practice. For this reason, he used a story that provided rich images of teaching practice to highlight the ideas he wanted his teachers to explore. The story:

- provided a model of ‘good practice’;
- made explicit a teacher’s decision-making process as it related to the issue of student grouping;
- provided a concrete description of two students with different approaches working together to solve a maths problem.

Nash used the ideas in the story and the set of questions as a basis for discussion at a staff meeting. He also gave teachers the opportunity to think about the grouping issue prior to the meeting. He ensured that the discussion focused on the teaching and learning implications of grouping rather than on the policy itself.

His approach to structuring this staff meeting was open-ended and adaptable. This enabled teachers to develop their own thinking and make links to their own classroom practice. He also knew enough about the relationships between different kinds of mathematical thinking to build upon the ideas the story raised and to facilitate in-depth discussion.

**Knowledge of diverse learners and how diversity promotes learning outcomes**

The principal believed that ability grouping restricts students’ opportunity to explore different ways of solving mathematics problems. In addition, he believed that such grouping contributes to a de-skilling of teachers since it does not help them build the skills they need to teach students of diverse abilities.

He believed that these ideas could be best communicated to teachers via an in-depth, conceptual account of teaching practice that:

- showed students of differing abilities developing their maths problem-solving skills by working together;
- illustrated the limitations of maths teaching that does not support diverse abilities;
- provided a rich description of pedagogical decision making that would extend his teachers’ thinking about mathematics teaching.

The structured questions developed by Nash challenged his teachers’ assumptions and focused their attention on how diversity within maths groups can promote a range of student learning outcomes. Nash’s teachers began to understand the potential benefits of heterogeneous groups.
Activity 2: Teachers working together on a mathematical word problem

Nash designed a second activity, based on what he had learned from his involvement in the first meeting:

_I felt that I just need to think of this [first] session as time to hear them, listen to them talk about the topic, something related to the topic and to get them to generate some ideas. Now I have something to work with._

He wanted to extend his teachers’ understanding of ability grouping by demonstrating to them that the use of different strategies to solve a problem may reflect different ways of understanding mathematical ideas rather than different developmental stages. He designed an open-ended mathematics problem that would give teachers themselves experience of working in mixed-ability groups.

A maths problem

Recently Paul learned how to construct small rafts with Popsicle sticks. Each raft is made with five Popsicle sticks. Paul bought five packages of Popsicle sticks, and there are 11 Popsicle sticks in each package. How many rafts will Paul be able to construct?

The answer to this word problem, which is essentially a factoring problem, is 11 rafts of five Popsicle sticks each. In concrete terms, there are 55 Popsicle sticks altogether, which are first bundled into five packages of 11 sticks each and then into 11 rafts of five sticks each. In abstract terms, $5 \times 11 = 55$, and $55 + 5 = 11$.

As the group shared the strategies they used to solve the problem, they could see that they varied considerably. Some used very concrete, visual methods that involved manipulating the objects (sticks), while others employed more abstract techniques that involved identifying an appropriate calculation (multiplication and/or division).

Having had this experience of working in heterogeneous groups, the teachers were able to discuss the implications of having a classroom in which the students use a range of problem-solving strategies—particularly the implication that students might learn from observing strategies other than their own. Nash ended the discussion by identifying what teachers needed to do to maximise the learning potential of mixed-ability mathematics classes.

Principal knowledge and skills to promote teacher learning

Knowledge of the discipline

Having developed a good understanding of his teachers’ views about heterogeneous grouping during the first activity, the principal was then able to design a practical task that would extend their thinking. Given his conceptual understanding of mathematics and his awareness of how children learn, he was able to tailor the task so that it would show teachers:

- that students can learn from each other (as the teachers did in activity 1);
- how learning occurs in heterogeneous groups.

Teachers were given an opportunity to examine the mathematical structure of the problem, explore extensions, and experience what it would feel like to be a student in a heterogeneous group. In doing so, they were able to see that, even though some solutions were more mathematically sophisticated than others, each represented a subtly different way of interpreting the problem, and that these differences had the power to extend the understanding of everyone in the group.

Knowledge of how to promote teacher learning

While Nash’s conceptual knowledge of mathematics enabled him to design an appropriate activity, it was his practical judgment that alerted him to the value of having teachers work collaboratively on a problem. By having his teachers work together, Nash strengthened the ideas introduced during activity 1. This allowed them to experience heterogeneous grouping from the perspective of their students. Through subsequent discussion of the strategies that they had used to solve the problem, the teachers could see that:

- ideas embedded in a mathematics problem can be quite complex;
- the basic ideas underlying a mathematics problem can be developed and connected to other mathematical ideas.

By running the staff meeting as a ‘doing mathematics’ community, the principal encouraged a pedagogical exploration of learning mathematics in a heterogeneous classroom that could then inform discussion of grouping.
One of the key ideas Nash wanted to convey to his teachers was that diverse students in heterogeneous classrooms don’t simply know more or less than each other, they approach mathematics in different ways. By giving the teachers the opportunity to work in diverse groups, they were able to experience for themselves their potential benefits. As they explored the complexities of a seemingly simple mathematics problem, they saw that different but equally valid solution strategies were possible. In this way, they could see the importance of moving beyond the obvious (‘some students work faster’) to considering how learning actually occurs (‘children have different ways of understanding mathematical ideas’). This discussion gave the principal what he needed to begin helping his teachers develop the skills they needed to support diverse learners in their own classrooms.

Key questions

1. Which management practices in your school could be explored by teachers for their pedagogical implications?
2. How could you design an activity to find out what teachers know about heterogeneous grouping and its implications for student learning? (The activity might perhaps involve a reflective article, guiding questions, or a focused discussion.)
3. If you do not have in-depth knowledge of effective pedagogy in mathematics (for example), how might you, nevertheless, still promote the sort of discussion that occurred in this case?

Source


Further reading


A literacy initiative in a kura

This case documents how the staff of a kura, together with its whānau, students, and a researcher, collaborated to develop a programme that would assist Māori-medium students to make the transition to a bilingual secondary school, the only option available in their community. The students were leaving the kura highly competent in te reo Māori, both culturally and academically.

Tumuaki: They had all that potential but I wondered why they were not succeeding when they went to college. I think about all the kids that have gone to college from here. Bright as, top athletes, top musicians, culturally really really high level.

Few, however, had received any formal instruction in English.

The kura started receiving information from the secondary school that caused alarm amongst the kura whānau.

Whānau kura liaison teacher: It was scare tactics in the beginning ... What brought that about was the statistics from the college, remember Koro? (Koro nods his head in agreement) ... They [the secondary school] do that to all schools, they send the stats back to the school on what the children have got on [English] comprehension and other tests taken at college. I thought that can't be right ... I thought, what gives here?

Although the kura whānau wanted their children to continue succeeding when they got to secondary school, many were not. They attributed this partly to a failure to prepare them for the next phase of their education, which would include English-medium teaching. The whānau wanted to make sure that by the time their children reached secondary school, they would be competent readers and writers of English, but they wanted to do this without compromising their fluency in te reo Māori. The whānau weren't sure how to achieve this, so they sought advice from a Māori literacy researcher.

A 10-week literacy programme involving trained tutors from kura whānau and the wider community was collaboratively developed and then implemented over a period of 12 months. Assessment data showed that, following participation in the programme, year 8 students were able to read and discuss English text at age-appropriate levels and that their rates of writing had improved. Importantly, they had maintained or increased their fluency in Māori, in both reading and writing. These results were replicated with groups of students in years 6 and 7.

In this case, we identify three key leadership dimensions that were involved in the development and implementation of this successful programme: establishing goals and expectations, strategic resourcing, and creating educationally powerful connections.

Research context

The research was instigated by the tumuaki on behalf of the whānau of the kura kaupapa Māori concerned. The kura was committed to the principle of developing bilingualism and biculturalism by first ensuring that students achieve linguistic, academic, and cultural competence in Māori. This principle is similar to that found in Te Aho Matua, the philosophical statement that guides the operations of many kura. Te Aho Matua states that, while the kura whānau should ensure that the language used in the kura is, for the most part, exclusively Māori, the goal is competency in both Māori and English:

2.2 Mo ngā tamariki, kia rua ngā reo. Ko te reo o ngā mātua tipuna tuatahi, ko te reo o tauiwi tuarua. Kia orite te pakari o ia reo, kia tū tangata ai ngā tamariki i roto i te ao Māori, i roto hoki i te ao o Tauriwi.

2.4 I runga i tenei whakaaro, kia tere pakari ai te reo o ngā tamariki, me whakahaere ngā mahi katoa o te kura i roto i te reo Māori. Tae atu ki te hunga kuhu mai ki roto i te kura, me körero Māori katoa, i ngā wā katoa.

Whānau of different kura make different decisions around the place and timing of English language teaching. In this case, the tumuaki wrote to the researcher seeking her support to develop a literacy programme for their year 8 students, all of whom were fluent readers, writers, and speakers of te reo Māori. The researcher believed that workload, distance, and funding prevented her from working with the kura at that time. Accompanied by a native speaker of Māori, she travelled to the kura to explain kanohi ki te kanohi why this was so.

In the ensuing discussion of reading, it became apparent to the hui that whānau and community members could be powerful resources for improving students' literacy in English. Although they were not all fluent Māori speakers, they were all fluent and literate in English. The researcher was asked about programmes she was involved in, and three were identified that could be implemented as school–home partnerships: a reading tutoring programme (Pause, Prompt, Praise or PPP for short) and two writing procedures (responsive writing and a form of structured brainstorm).

While the researcher had said that she wouldn't be available to work with the kura for six months, the whānau was adamant that this would be too late for their current year 8 students, given that term 3 had already begun. The programmes needed to begin immediately.
Establishing goals and expectations

In chapters 5 and 6, we discussed setting and communicating goals for teacher and student learning. We argued that goals do not motivate unless they are seen to be important and that they gain in importance by being linked to wider philosophical and moral purposes. The goals for this particular initiative sat within a wider vision held by Māori—for the language, cultural regeneration, and educational achievement. The kura whānau was philosophically, spiritually, and culturally committed to this vision.

Goals for bilingual competence are set by leaders at the national level and by iwi, whānau, kaumātua, and tumuaki.

It was as a result of whānau and iwi exercising leadership at the national level that kura kaupapa Māori, now a significant educational movement, were established, funded, and resourced. National and iwi leadership were also involved in developing the movement’s philosophical base, with its focus on bilingualism and biculturalism.

The leadership of the kura at the centre of this study identified that, somehow, their policy was obstructing achievement of their goals, and that this needed to be rectified.

Tumuaki: One of the main objectives was to become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural. I mean that was the brief. That they [the students] would be as fluent in English as they were in Māori ... there was no policy to prepare these kids for college and they were going to a bilingual unit. I felt it was a golden opportunity to use PPP for transition.

The kura’s accountability to whānau and hapū ensured that this initiative was accorded priority. And because whānau and hapū had a strong sense of collective responsibility, all those involved saw the initiative as urgent and important.

Tumuaki: There was a common purpose. Us as staff and also us as a community, and really it does hinge upon, I guess, leadership, leadership in the school and in the hapū. You can’t have one without the other ... It was easy for me working with the hapū, for a start one of the kaumātua is my father-in-law ... I know the Ngāti Ira people really well. I can whakapapa there myself.

Initially, there was not unanimous support for developing a literacy programme that included reading and writing in English, but the kura leadership helped the kura whānau to get to the point where they agreed there was a problem and were prepared to seek a solution.

Board of Trustees Chairperson: There were a couple of parents who felt there shouldn’t be any English whatsoever in the school ... the rest of them, they really did want their children to read successfully in English as well as in Māori.

... In fact, there seemed to be a general consensus among the people that were part of it that they wanted to be there, that they were all in this together.

1. In kura kaupapa Māori, identifying and setting important educational goals involves making sure that these fit with the cultural and philosophical agenda that underpins the movement.

2. School leadership alone cannot resolve issues associated with setting and meeting goals for student learning and achievement. Also needed is effective leadership from whānau and hapū/ iwi.

Strategic resourcing

In chapters 5 and 6, we discussed how leadership is exercised in obtaining and allocating material, intellectual, and human resources for the purpose of pursuing pedagogical goals. The tumuaki in this kura exercised leadership in this way by:

1. identifying the researcher as a potential intellectual and research resource and negotiating a research relationship;

2. ensuring that the kura whānau were able to make decisions based on good information;

3. leading the kura whānau, as its members worked collaboratively with the researcher to obtain or develop resources necessary for implementing the literacy initiative.

At the initial hui involving the researcher and the kura, whānau and community members were identified as appropriate and powerful resources for a literacy initiative aligned with pedagogical purposes. Importantly, this ensured that whanaungatanga underpinned all parts of the initiative, including its resourcing.
PPP tutors were drawn mainly from students’ own whānau or from the wider community in which the kura was situated. An appropriate person from outside the community was engaged to develop the students’ writing skills through the use of responsive writing strategies.

Leadership was exercised in ensuring that funding was made available for priorities associated with student literacy development. The literacy initiative got under way thanks to the efforts of whānau and community volunteers, with the board of trustees providing a budget for research travel and accommodation. Following implementation, the board made sure that the programme would be resourced on an ongoing basis by making its costs part of the annual budget.

The tumuaki’s leadership was apparent in the way in which decisions made by the kura whānau were planned, deliberate, and based on factual information. He pointed out that it was critical to have “enough information to make the decision as a board as well as a community”.

The leadership of the year 7 and 8 kaiako was essential to the success of the initiative. Taking on the role of community and school liaison teacher, she was responsible for the implementation of the reading and writing strategies. She approached parents and whānau members to explain the project, the training and support provided, and the commitment required of tutors. She monitored the weekly tutoring, helped select appropriate reading material, and provided feedback on student progress. She regularly supplied the researcher with audiotapes of the tutors in action, and she subsequently shared the researcher’s feedback with them. She also played a key role in supporting the staff to continue consulting and partnering with the whānau, community, and researcher.

The PPP reading and writing tutoring programme was developed in New Zealand as a means of helping home and school to work together to raise standards of literacy. In the case of this kura, the researcher trained the kaiako to use the programme, then the kaiako trained the tutors. These included kaumātua, parents and grandparents, and young men and women from the community. The tutoring took place at school, but many of the students had parents who had done the training and who were able to give them further tutoring at home.

Young male PPP tutor: I really enjoyed the whole thing, it was awesome, it was a real learning experience … I think for these kids and for us, the tutors, that there was like, that element of an emotional experience in terms of having gone through something important together … It took the stress off them [the students], they knew they could do it in English now and they could feel good about having the Māori as well. What they could do when they are reading with English they can do in Māori.

The research team trained a member of their research and development centre, a young woman from outside the kura community/iwi, in responsive writing strategies. Once a week, she would respond in writing (in English) to the messages in the students’ stories, sharing her experiences and feelings. She would then return the writing books to the liaison teacher. Warm, personal relationships developed between her and the students through this sharing of writing, but they did not meet her kanohi ki te kanohi until they had completed the programme.

Hinemaia: Since I have been writing to her, I have expressed my true feelings about all my writing and now when I write to anybody, I think about Soli and how she encouraged me through my writing. It almost feels like I know her.

The programme was implemented largely with the help of volunteer tutors. Since then, the kura has been able to find the funds to employ suitable people as tutors, ensuring that the literacy programme—in Māori and in English—becomes part of ‘regular business’:

Chairperson of the School Board of Trustees: Now the school has agreed to employ people to run PPP and TTT (Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi – te reo Māori reading programme), not relying any more on volunteers. The programmes are going to be ongoing at regular times, regular days, and in that way with it being a small [school] roll, two teacher aides to do that, the kids should get a reasonable, fairly good sort of coverage.

Leaders played a key role in resourcing the goals that were valued by the kura whānau. The researcher, the tumuaki, and the kaiako all exercised leadership by finding appropriate people to work with the students and by making sure that those people had opportunities to learn the necessary knowledge, skills, and practices. Whānau and community members were key resources in the pursuit of illiteracy goals that they saw as vital for the academic and cultural futures of their young people.
Creating educationally powerful connections

In chapters 6 and 7, we explained how creating educationally powerful connections between individuals, organisations, and cultures can facilitate student achievement. Such connections achieve this by ensuring a better pedagogical and philosophical match between what students bring to school and what happens to them there, and by ensuring continuity of success as students move from one school environment to another. In this case, the kura drew on powerful whakapapa and community connections to ensure that its students were equipped for continuing achievement when they moved to the bilingual secondary school and that the pursuit of biliteracy goals continued without pause.

This study shows how the leaders of a kura, by focusing on goals that have been identified as important, ensure continuity in their students’ literacy learning and achievement when they change schools. Their kaupapa, shared by many kura, was competence firstly in te reo Māori me ōna tikanga and then in English, so that students would be equipped to live as Māori, bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate. To support this goal, it was necessary to raise students’ levels of literacy in English while maintaining or improving their literacy in Māori.

It was also important to the kura, whānau, and community that the kura whānau participate in the learning of its own young people. Relationships were critical to the success of the literacy initiative. By involving tutors from the students’ own whānau and community, existing whānau and whakapapa connections were drawn on and strengthened in educationally powerful ways.

Young male PPP tutor: Well, we were all from the area, part of the whānau and stuff from there, and I think just improving everyone’s confidence and stuff, yeah … I think that was important because then all the kids already knew the people they were being tutored by …

Mother and PPP tutor: … like at first I didn’t really know her [the student] very well. I think she’s my cousin or something, but towards the end we started, even down the street, she would give us a yell and come over and have a little natter about stuff and see how things were going …

Student: We had a lot of laughs together. If I didn’t know how to read, she would tell me to give it a go, I’d just laugh and she would laugh with me. She was real cool. Getting to know my tutor better was an excellent part of the reading.

At the pōwhiri to the initial hui, the speakers linked the researcher to their community through whakapapa. This set in motion a process akin to moral imperative, in which whanaungatanga is used to recruit the necessary expertise into an enterprise.

The importance of whanaungatanga and connections with community, hapu, and iwi were recognised and drawn on effectively in this initiative, which was designed to support the development of biliteracy and ensure that students were well prepared for the transition from a full-immersion primary school to a bilingual secondary school.

Findings/outcomes of the literacy initiative

Measures of students’ reading and writing in English and Māori were taken at four assessment points: before, during, and at the conclusion of the 10-week initiative, and during the maintenance period. An analysis of all the measures showed that the groups of year 6, 7, and 8 students all made significant improvements in reading and writing English. Analysis of the measures for Māori reading and writing revealed that the students who were already very proficient retained their competence, while the others made statistically significant gains across the four assessment points. In addition, many of the qualitative gains in English writing were also evident in the students’ written Māori.

These findings show that instruction in English literacy does not compromise literacy in te reo Māori when it is well developed, and it may actually enhance te reo Māori competences. The kura has continued to use the programme, including the assessment strategies in Māori.

Key questions

1. Consider what knowledge and understandings your kura whānau has about literacy and bilingualism and their relationship to the regeneration and maintenance of te reo Māori and to student achievement. If weak, how might they be effectively grown and used?
2. How are you able to demonstrate that your students are succeeding in the language(s) of instruction?
3. What policies and practices relating to biliteracy and bilingualism does your kura have in place?
4. What discussions has your kura whānau had about the impact that teaching English literacy might have on students’ competence in te reo Māori?
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This case explores how one school developed educational connections with its families in a way that had a payoff in terms of impact on student outcomes. We use the word ‘educational’ very deliberately here because parent/whānau involvement is often viewed by schools (and parents) as little more than an adjunct to the real work of schools. The case will demonstrate that parents can contribute to the real work in ways that benefit students, teachers, and themselves. These benefits accrue to a school that makes direct, focused efforts to work with families to raise student achievement.

The case involves the implementation by a senior management team (SMT) of a parent tutoring programme known as Reading Together. Through this programme, schools work with parents to help them develop tutoring skills that have been demonstrated to improve reading comprehension and foster positive parent–child–teacher relationships. The SMT became interested in the programme because it was research-based, the evidence indicated substantially improved outcomes for students, and its demands on resources seemed reasonable in light of the potential gains.

The case is informed by recent research into the implementation of the Reading Together programme at St Joseph’s School, Otahuhu. Reading Together was designed by Jeanne Biddulph in 1983 to help parents tutor children who were experiencing reading difficulties. When first introduced, it produced significant improvement in children’s reading, together with improvements in parent–child and parent–teacher relationships. Similar outcomes have been observed over the last two decades in a range of contexts519. Tuck (the source for this case) extended this research base by focusing specifically on leadership and administrative processes associated with implementation.

Data for this research were collected from a variety of sources, including:

- interviews with key people involved in the programme (the senior management team, teaching staff, and programme developer);
- observations of two workshops;
- a review of relevant documents (in particular, children’s running records).

St Joseph’s is a state-integrated, Catholic primary school with a roll of 318. Nearly 90% of students identify as Sàmoan, Tongan, Cook Islands, or Niuean. Although a decile 1 school, its attendance rates are consistently higher than for other low-decile schools. There is little evidence of truanting (ERO review, 2004). The school has a very stable and experienced senior management team comprising the principal, deputy principal, and associate principal.

In Chapter 7, we discussed the type of leadership involved in creating educationally effective school–home connections. We found that, to create learning connections that will be sustainable and have a significant impact on student achievement, school leaders need to foster a shared sense of responsibility amongst their staff. School–home partnership programmes that were designed, funded, and implemented by external personnel with little internal involvement struggled to gain teacher ownership. Lack of shared ownership increases the likelihood that there will be discontinuity between the school–home programme and learning taking place in the classroom.

In this case, we will see how the principal fostered shared ownership of the Reading Together programme by building relational trust with her staff. In Chapter 8, we described how trust relationships are particularly important in situations where people are being asked to take risks and make changes. At St Joseph’s, the programme became part of the everyday life of the school. Those teachers who were not directly involved in the workshops were very supportive of the senior management team’s efforts to implement the programme. They could describe the general structure and content of the training; they expressed interest in the running of the workshops; and they were able to identify and discuss positive changes in the participating children and their families520.
In this case, we see how relational trust enabled the staff to develop a shared commitment to the programme and to win the confidence and the commitment of the participating parents. As the research on which this case is based focused primarily on the principal, we illustrate how the principal exemplified the four qualities of relational trust identified in Chapter 8 and what the consequences were.

1. **Personal integrity**

Integrity is a measure of the extent to which the values and principles espoused by a leader are consistently seen in their daily practice.

**Leader value:** An informed community

The principal was deeply committed to developing an ‘informed community’ within her school. She believed that staff understanding of new teaching and learning initiatives created a knowledge base that informed professional discourse. Out of this informed discourse grew opportunities for professional development, mutual support, and shared responsibility for initiatives.

**Consistency with actions:** The principal created opportunities to foster staff understanding

The principal placed a high priority on ensuring that school staff who were not directly involved in the programme were familiar with its design and rationale. All teachers at the school were involved, at least indirectly, in Reading Together—through their contacts with the participating students, their families, and school leaders. To ensure their understanding of the programme, the principal invited the developer to talk to them about its aims, procedures, and research base. In subsequent staff meetings, the leadership team let teachers know who would lead the workshops, how children and families would be selected, and which children would be involved. Teachers were also invited to attend the workshops.

**Modelling the qualities of leadership**

The principal’s efforts to develop staff understanding created opportunities for informal, unplanned conversations between the team leaders and teachers. She recalled “lots of conversations on the run or on the hop … and not just [with the senior management team] … there are always key people on your staff who are really interested in such initiatives.” These informal conversations were often initiated by the leadership team. Teachers who attended the workshops also served as key conduits of information and, with the leadership team, constituted an important information network.

In summary, the leader’s integrity was seen in the match between her commitment to an informed community and the steps she took to ensure that it happened. These steps had three important outcomes:

- Even those who were not directly involved in the programme were made to feel included, were kept fully aware of its design and rationale, and were able to discuss positive changes in students and families. Commitment to the programme was fostered by the resulting professional discussions.
- The meetings with the programme developer were important professional development opportunities. For senior leaders, they were the beginning of professional learning that was to continue for the duration of the programme.
- The sense of mutual, collective support was enhanced as staff took opportunities to recognise and affirm the contribution of the workshop leaders.
2. Respect

Respect grows out of the realisation that many different people have important, mutually dependent roles to play in educating our young people. It involves valuing those roles and fostering the regard that is critical for relationship-building and shared commitment to goals.

Communicating respect to staff

Valuing staff time

The principal showed respect to her senior management team by evaluating the programme’s appropriateness for her school and community before introducing it to them. She wanted to see whether it aligned with her beliefs about constructive school–home relationships and whether it would complement the school’s existing language programme. She also wanted to investigate its practicality in terms of the financial and human resources required. In this way she avoided the risk of wasting staff time by asking them to consider a programme that was neither appropriate nor feasible. Her senior staff recognised, and indeed expected, this respect:

Liz wouldn’t waste our time … that is the trust we have … we know she would have researched things.

She would have thought about it … seen the value.

Involving senior leaders in the decision-making process

Before committing the school to the programme, the principal discussed it with her senior management team. She considered these two teachers potential workshop leaders and was only willing to proceed if they saw the programme as a worthwhile use of limited resources. By fully discussing the Reading Together decision with them and seeking their professional judgment, she conveyed her respect for them:

You respect (their judgment). If they had come back to me and said this is far too difficult or is not actually going to work—I would have certainly taken that on board.

Informing staff about the workshops

Although classroom teachers were not directly involved in Reading Together, they were kept fully informed about the structure and content of the programme. In this way, their role in educating their students and maintaining relationships with parents was recognised and respected:

There is a sort of a culture of community based ownership of children’s progress. We don’t see a teacher in a classroom as being responsible, just solely responsible for that child’s progress. It is a much broader issue than that and there is a lot of consultation around all kinds of issues to progress and facilitate children’s learning … I think there is a real sincere desire among the staff to make a difference and to kind of progress and … we look at ways that how we are best going to achieve that, probably.

This effort to inform them and seek their views had three important outcomes for staff:

- It enabled the senior management team to take ownership of the programme.
- It enhanced the status of the programme in the school and, as a result, won teacher interest and commitment. As the principal noted:

It [Cathy and Marian’s involvement] and our commitment gave the programme real status both with staff and parents.

- Teachers engaged in professional discussions with each other and with workshop leaders about programme processes and outcomes.
Communicating respect to parents

Affirming the role parents play in children's education

To encourage parental involvement in the workshops and ensure the status of the programme, the principal personally contacted every potential family and invited them to participate:

*I tried to make it as personal as possible … I talked to them about the programme … (made them aware) that I was asking them because I knew they were interested in their children.*

To further recognise and affirm the parents’ role, at the conclusion of the programme they were presented with graduating certificates and pictures of themselves reading with their child. Photos were also displayed in the entrance foyer for the children to see.

Developing cooperative relationships with parents

The senior management team took a number of deliberate steps to develop cooperative relationships with parents:

- They held the workshops in the staffroom (rather than a classroom) because it was a more comfortable, informal environment.
- They welcomed parents by their first names and engaged with them in conversations over tea and biscuits.
- They began the workshops with a prayer, partly in Sàmoan.
- They made themselves available, both before and after the workshops, for informal discussion.
- They ran additional sessions for parents who were unable to attend on a particular night.
- The principal visited each workshop and talked informally with parents.

This emphasis on affirming the parents’ role and developing cooperative relationships had at least two important outcomes:

- The cooperative parent–teacher relationships that were established carried over into different contexts:
  *We do have parents now who will come in and very shy parents who wouldn’t ever come into the classroom …*
- Workshop leaders gained insight into Sàmoan protocols and how Sàmoan parents interact with their children:
  *It gave us incredible insight into what was going on in the homes in terms of [discipline] … As one father said, we only know the PI way … That was discussed in every workshop.*

The principal, teachers, and parents all played roles, whether directly or indirectly, in the Reading Together workshops. The SMT respected the contribution that each person was making to the education of the children. Out of all these interactions came a pedagogical partnership to improve student outcomes.

3. Competence

Competence is another criterion for relational trust. When people rely on others for the education of children, they care about their competence. They judge the competence of leaders and teachers by the value they add.

The principal demonstrated her competence by the way in which she rigorously investigated the appropriateness of the Reading Together workshops for her school (via emails, phone conversations, and meetings with the programme developer and by seeking the advice of her leadership team). She also demonstrated her competence by her active involvement in the workshops, in the administrative support she provided for her senior leaders (by, for example, making the initial contact with parents, sending out follow-up letters, and collating feedback), and in her informal interactions with parents during the workshops. Her goal was to ensure the success of the programme for all involved: families, children, and workshop leaders:

*If you are asking teachers on your staff to do something, you want to set it up so that it goes well … If you are going to put in time and energy and you are asking others to put in time and energy then you want to set it up for success … so it is not disappointing for them.*

By asking her senior staff to commit to the programme and by demonstrating confidence in their ability to lead the workshops, the principal communicated to them her expectation that they would prove competent: “… trust [on Liz’s part] and … [the] trust we give to her” creates a “… sense of empowerment!” “Liz knew we would be able to do it.” They also understood that she was committed to developing their skills so that they could lead the programme as effectively as possible. They engaged in considerable planning and preparation before they felt confident of successful outcomes.
Reading the material… we still met every night before… and there was a good weekend’s commitment… We were really confident of the outcomes… we thought it would be successful… the benefits… looked great for parents.

The principal trusted the skills, knowledge, and professionalism of the leaders but, by involving herself in the workshops, she was able to gain a “feel for how it was going” and judge if the programme was adding value for students. She was also able to confirm the competence of her people: “They were very skilled… and very quick to pick up on [parents’ concerns]… made parents feel at ease…”

The obvious competence of the SMT was an important factor in the creation of an informed community that collectively accepted responsibility for student success. As one teacher observed:

Liz is very competent, very confident, very clear with what she wants to achieve and I think she has very high standards and you feel, well I feel that I need to meet those standards…

The drive and the leadership comes from Liz at that level. From there I think there are a whole range of… there are some very competent, able professional staff here who then facilitate at a number of levels… Yeah I think so, and I think, I really do think we have a very strong layer of leadership for them to grow they need to be really well supported and that does happen. Liz is a true mentor and I have always said that for people in leadership there needs to be the leader, but there [also needs to be the people] at the next level.

4. Personal regard

Personal regard is the fourth determinant of relational trust. It involves caring about others—as people and as professionals. Knowing that others care can reduce vulnerability, increase social affiliation, and invite reciprocal regard.

One of the ways in which this principal communicated personal regard was by actively involving herself in the workshops. This influenced relational trust on two levels.

First, one of the reasons for her involvement was a concern for her senior leaders. She realised that they already had very busy schedules and would be challenged to find the time to fit in a major new responsibility. To ease the extra load, she undertook a share of the tasks involved. Still concerned about the demands on the leaders, she provided further collegial support by actively participating in the workshops. This continuing support signalled to the team that she cared about them.

She is here when we are running it… and that is all support she is not like gone home and left us to it. She could have gone home, she did not have to stay here…

Second, her involvement arose out of an ‘ethic of care’ that she shared with the SMT for the well-being of the children and families associated with their school. The programme developer particularly observed their sensitivity to and awareness of the needs of families. All their actions in relation to the programme were prompted by genuine concern.

These two strands of personal regard provided the foundation for staff commitment to the Reading Together programme. Further, the principal’s efforts to get her staff onboard can be viewed as the creation of ‘an informed community that cares about the well-being of students and their families’. Not only did the staff become familiar with the rationale for the programme and familiar with its structure, on numerous occasions they demonstrated their support for the team leaders and the participating children, particularly in informal conversations. They might do this by making general inquiries (“How did it go last night?”) or observations concerning programme outcomes, for example.

The underlying factors… it does come from the top and it is that desire for all children to be able to succeed and really just wanting them to do well… and wanting their parents to help to be better parents and we all want it, but it has to be driven from somewhere (teacher comment).

In this case, we have seen how trust is particularly important when creating educationally focused connections between teachers and families. When people trust one another, they feel supported and are willing to take risks, make greater effort, and learn from one another.

Key questions

1. What school–home connections are important in your school? To what extent is the focus of these connections on student learning? How can this focus be sharpened?

2. How does your own leadership exemplify the four qualities of relational trust? How could you work with others to better exemplify them?

3. In your school, how much trust is there between parents and teachers on educational matters? Utilising existing connections, what small steps could be taken to increase that trust?


Leadership through the selection and design of smart tools

Not all educational leadership involves face-to-face interaction. Leadership is also exercised in less personal ways, through the selection and design of such tools as written policy documents (for example, curriculum statements), graphs, software (for example, asTTle), and templates. Given the power of tools to shape teaching practice, it is important to evaluate their worth. Is a tool ‘smart’, because it helps those it influences to improve their practice, or is it ‘dumb’, because it shapes their practice in undesirable ways?

Smart tools have two particular qualities: they incorporate a sound, evidence-based theory about how to achieve the tool’s purpose and they are well designed. In this case, we evaluate two curriculum documents in terms of the second quality, good design. The examples are from Aitken’s study of curriculum design in social studies.

Aitken contends that effective design involves:
1. making connections with teachers’ prior understandings;
2. accommodating the limited capacity of users’ working memory.

He uses the research on principles of curriculum design to examine the 1997 national policy statement Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum and then provides a model social studies curriculum statement as an example of effective curriculum design.

If a curriculum document (whether national or school) is badly designed—if the expression of ideas is unclear or contradictory—then the integrity of the learning area will be undermined and the effectiveness of teaching compromised. If documents are well designed, they are likely to be understood and used. This will increase the probability of a positive impact on student outcomes. Policy makers and school leaders need to be familiar with what constitutes good policy/curriculum design so that they can select or develop policies that teachers will be able to understand and implement in ways that will enhance student learning.

The principles of good tool design

Drawing on cognitive theory, Aitken identified the two principles of effective design set out above. The following box explains how they apply to the design of curriculum documents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well-designed tools make connections with teachers’ prior understandings</th>
<th>Well-designed tools accommodate the limited capacity of users’ working memory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They:</td>
<td>They:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• clearly communicate the purpose of the curriculum so that attention is focused on the underlying intentions;</td>
<td>• use graphics to show how the various requirements of the curriculum are interconnected and to utilise the full capacity of working memory (visual and verbal);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• anticipate the existing understandings (schema) that teachers are likely to bring to the curriculum and the misconceptions these might create;</td>
<td>• organise text logically and use signalling devices to reduce the cognitive load when connecting related text that is located in different places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• link abstract principles with concrete examples so that policy intentions are most likely to be attended to by teachers.</td>
<td>• develop an internally coherent design that minimises complexity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Design of the 1997 social studies curriculum statement

Aitken then analysed the New Zealand social studies curriculum (1997) to identify the extent to which the principles of good design were evident. Based on his analysis, he generated a set of design criteria to guide future curriculum development. To show how they would promote sense-making, the author used them to develop a model ‘essence statement’ for social studies\[521\].

\[521\] This statement was constructed by the author as an examplar of good curriculum design. It does not have official status.
Leadership through selecting, developing, and using smart tools

Aitken’s six criteria for evaluating the design of a policy or curriculum statement are:
1. It is logically structured around a clear and unambiguous purpose.
2. It clearly explains the rationale for change.
3. It incorporates misconception alerts.
4. It acknowledges teachers’ existing understandings and integrates them into the new document.
5. It maximises internal coherence and minimises complexity.
6. It clearly connects abstract ideas to spatially contiguous detail and examples.

We outline these criteria in the following sections and conclude the case with examples from Aitken’s model curriculum statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion 1</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The statement is logically structured around a clear and unambiguous purpose</td>
<td>Settling on a clear purpose makes the development process more difficult, but it is essential for creating coherence and reducing the cognitive load required to implement disparate and potentially contradictory elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coherence is enhanced when there is a single aim that is clearly aligned to the core purpose of the curriculum and when all elements of the curriculum are derived directly from this core purpose. The following example elaborates and illustrates this criterion using Aitken’s model essence statement for social studies.

A model aim statement

The aim of social studies
The aim of social studies is to build the capacity for students to participate in human communities and to contribute to the common good.

“Participate in human communities” refers to the pursuit of individual and group interests and aspirations; “contribute to the common good” refers to contribution to the wider community and to fulfilling responsibilities beyond personal or immediate group aspirations.

“Developing understanding of how human communities operate” refers to the pursuit of individual and group interests and aspirations; “contribute to the common good” refers to contribution to the wider community and to fulfilling responsibilities beyond personal or immediate group aspirations.

Strand titles are aligned to the purpose of citizenship education and the relationship is defined in the text that follows.
Leadership dimension 8

Criterion 2
The statement clearly explains the rationale for change

Rationale
Drawing attention to the underlying purposes counteracts the tendency to attend only to the surface features of policy or curriculum.

In the example below, the ‘Rationale for change’ box alerts users to important differences between the aim of the 1997 curriculum statement and the aim found in the new essence statement. Placement of the rationale next to the relevant text minimises the cognitive load required to connect the two.

A model rationale

Rationale for change
The 1997 curriculum statement for social studies aims to "enable students to participate in a changing society as informed, confident and responsible citizens." This is essentially a citizenship education aim but, as stated, it is difficult to assess the contribution and impact of social studies because other school subjects contribute to this aim and because much of this participation occurs beyond the school. Hence the new and more specific emphasis in the essence statement on building capacity, participating at the more manageable level of communities (rather than "society"), and on the common good purpose.

The aim of social studies
The aim of social studies is to build the capacity for students to participate in human communities and to contribute to the common good.

A clear rationale for change is provided directly to the left of the related curriculum element.

Criterion 3
The statement incorporates misconception alerts

Rationale
Misconception alerts serve to counteract possible over-assimilation by clarifying how the new policy differs from the old or from what might be assumed. In other words, their function is to minimise confusion about what the policy is and is not.

Misconception alerts avert possible misinterpretation by (a) clarifying in what ways the statement requires significant new understandings and practice, (b) affirming current practice, where teachers might incorrectly understand that it was to be discarded, and (c) explaining specifically what the statement is not suggesting. The model essence statement explains that the aim of social studies will be achieved by ‘developing understanding of how human communities operate’ and by ‘developing and applying the skills necessary for effective participation in human communities’.

The diagram shows how misconception alerts clarify the meaning of ‘developing understanding of how human communities operate’.

A model misconception alert
It is desirable to have continuity of language and meaning between old and new policies. When shifts in language and meaning are necessary, well-designed statements make links between old and new understandings. This can be achieved by:

- providing a rationale that alerts teachers to changes in emphasis;
- describing the difficulties associated with current policy (where more substantive change is required).

By framing such explanations as critiques of current policy rather than current practice, users are less likely to be alienated.

**A model connection to existing understandings**

The names of strands use familiar words, for example: ‘organisation’, ‘culture’, ‘heritage’.

The rationale identifies substantive changes or reorganisations and explains the difficulties associated with the current curriculum.

The rationale phrases criticisms and shortcomings as critique of the 1997 curriculum, not as a critique of current practice.

Because the 1997 curriculum offers no direction about the New Zealand content that needs to be understood at each level, there is a hit-or-miss aspect to the development of this knowledge.

The ‘Essential learning about New Zealand Society’ section of the 1997 curriculum defines this knowledge but separates it from the achievement objectives, making it difficult to integrate and monitor. This statement makes the nature of this knowledge more explicit by including it as a strand with its own achievement objectives.

Complexity is reduced when:

- the same words are consistently used to communicate the same idea throughout the text (instead of varied to avoid repetition);
- headings are used to highlight the important ideas, and the words from the headings are then used in the subsequent text;
- connecting words and phrases are used to reinforce links between the different sections of the text.
- related sections of the text are placed together.

Complexity is further reduced by simplifying the structure of the text (for example, by reducing the number of curriculum requirements or achievement objectives).
A model showing how coherence can be maximised

**The aim of social studies**
The aim of social studies is to build the capacity for students to participate in human communities and to contribute to the common good.

**Achieving the aim**
Social studies will achieve this aim by developing understanding of how human communities operate and by developing and applying the skills necessary for effective participation in human communities.

**Developing understanding of how human communities operate**
By drawing on the content and methods of the social science disciplines … students will develop understanding of important ideas about how human communities operate …

**Strand 3: New Zealand society**
Students will understand the significance of the status of Māori political and economic organisation as tangata whenua; the nature and continuing importance of the Treaty of Waitangi …

**Criterion 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The curriculum statement clearly connects abstract ideas to spatially contiguous detail and examples</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text that communicates abstract ideas does not aid sense-making because abstract statements can be “understood in superficial and idiosyncratic ways”522. Abstract ideas in curriculum statements are most likely to be understood when they:</td>
<td>Helps accurate interpretation of principles and reduces cognitive load that is imposed if principles and examples are spatially separated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are supported by definitions that make their meaning clear (for example, by explaining how they will be applied or by giving examples);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are accompanied by misconception alerts that anticipate misunderstandings;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• come with performance objectives that make it clear what the desired outcomes are in terms of teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When curriculum statements are constructed in this way, the cognitive load on teachers is significantly reduced because they do not have to figure out for themselves what the abstract ideas mean and how they are to be applied. The following model shows how these techniques clarify the meaning of the concept ‘topical issue’.

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Leadership dimension 8

Model showing how the meaning of abstract ideas can be clarified with the help of concrete examples

"Topical issues" are those about which groups in the community urge conflicting courses of action based on different value judgments and where any resolution is likely to cause significant objection.

The focus in social studies is on the decision-making process associated with attempting to resolve public issues rather than issues of personal morals. These skills are best developed in situations that are meaningful to students and that are significant for human communities and societies. At each level, therefore, students will examine a range of topical political, economic, social, cultural or environmental issues.

Topical issues will form a fourth curriculum strand within which teachers select issues of relevance to their students and communities and which promote consideration of the common good.

Strand 4: Topical issues
As they carry out inquiry into topical issues, students at each level will learn to:
• clarify facts by distinguishing fact and opinion, by interrogating evidence, by detecting fallacies, and by clarifying meaning;
• clarify multiple historical perspectives;
• acknowledge and unravel interconnected causes ...

Conclusion
While we have used a curriculum statement to illustrate good policy design, the six criteria outlined above are applicable to any national or school policy. A policy’s design has a big influence on how well it is understood and implemented. Ensuring that policies and other tools are well designed is an important leadership task.

Key questions
Examine a curriculum statement or policy statement that influences leaders’ or teachers’ practice:
1. Is the purpose clear?
2. What understandings/misunderstandings are teachers likely to bring to their interpretation of the statement?
3. Are concrete examples provided to support the abstract ideas?
4. Could a graphic be used to indicate how the elements of the statement relate to each other?
5. Do the words used signal how the different parts of the text relate to each other?
6. Do the different elements of the policy (goals, procedures, success indicators ...) form a coherent whole?

Source

Further reading
References

Note: All Best Evidence Synthesis Programme publications can be accessed at www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/BES


"Wow! These sorts of things are similar to our culture!" Becoming culturally inclusive within the


### Glossary of Māori terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ako</td>
<td>Teaching and learning, understood as a single, reciprocal process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapū</td>
<td>Sub-tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Meeting, gathering, usually with a specific kaupapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwi</td>
<td>People, nation, tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiko</td>
<td>Teacher, instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanohi ki te kanohi</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaumātua</td>
<td>Elder, old man or woman, adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaupapa</td>
<td>Purpose, agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koro</td>
<td>Male elder, old man, grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuia</td>
<td>Female elder, old woman, grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kura</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kura kaupapa Māori</td>
<td>Māori-medium school with an identifiable philosophical base (e.g., Te Aho Matua)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kura whānau</td>
<td>The support network of families and extended families associated with a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngāti</td>
<td>Prefix denoting tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>New Zealand-born non-Māori, especially those of European descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāngarau</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pānui</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powhiri</td>
<td>Formal welcome or opening ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taonga</td>
<td>Prized possession, treasure, inheritance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Aho Matua</td>
<td>Literally, the central thread; the philosophical statement that guides the operations of many kura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te reo Māori</td>
<td>The Māori language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te reo Māori me ōna tikanga</td>
<td>Māori language and customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikanga</td>
<td>The usual and accepted procedure or way of doing things: protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuhituhi</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumuaki</td>
<td>Principal, head teacher, leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakapapa</td>
<td>Ancestry, genealogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whānau</td>
<td>Family, to be understood in a much more encompassing sense than the nuclear family; network of mutual supports and obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whanaungatanga</td>
<td>Sense of kinship, family, belonging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mo ngā tamariki, kia rua ngā reo. Ko te reo o ngā mâtua tipuna tuatahi, ko te reo o tauiwi tuaruia. Kia ōrite te pakari o ia reo, kia tu tangata ai ngā tamariki i roto i te ao Māori, i roto hoki i te ao o tauiwi. I runga i tēnei whakaaro, kia tere pakari ai te reo o ngā tamariki, me whakahaere ngā mahi katoa o te kura i roto i te reo Māori. Tae atu ki te hunga kuhu mai ki roto i te kura, me kōrero Māori katoa, i ngā wā katoa.

Kura kaupapa Māori, therefore:

- respect all languages;
- expect full competency in Māori and English for the children of the kura;
- affirm that total immersion most rapidly develops language competence and assert that the language of the kura be, for the most part, exclusively Māori.

*Te Aho Matua o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori.*

English interpretation by Dr Kāterina Te Heikōkō Mataira