# New Zealand

Rachel Borthwick
Megan Chamberlain[a]

*Ministry of Education*

## Introduction

### Overview of Education System[1]

New Zealand has a decentralized education system with three levels: early childhood education, schooling, and tertiary education. Authority for operations and financial management is devolved from central government to educational institutions. Responsibility for governance and accountability of state or state integrated schools are assigned to boards of trustees.[b] Boards consist of elected parent and community volunteers, the school principal, a staff representative, and in secondary schools, a student representative. Boards of trustees employ school staff, manage property and finances, and set a school charter that includes targets for student achievement.[2]

Four organizations play key roles in developing, implementing, and monitoring education policies across New Zealand's schooling sector:

- The Ministry of Education is the government's lead agency for the education system and is responsible for developing the national curriculum, providing policy advice to government, and funding educational institutions.

- The Education Review Office (ERO) evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services.[3]

- The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) ensures that New Zealand qualifications are accepted as credible and robust nationally and internationally. The authority administers the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).[4]

- The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand is the professional and regulatory organization for registered teachers in the early childhood education and schooling sectors.[5]

While most teaching and learning in New Zealand schools is in English, an important feature of the education system is learning in te reo Māori. Māori-medium education has stemmed from Māori efforts to ensure the survival of the Māori language and culture. It operates within a specific cultural framework and, in some instances, culture and language specific to a particular *iwi* (tribe). Māori Language Immersion Level 1, where instruction is delivered in te reo Māori at least 81

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[b] State integrated schools are schools that were registered private (independent) schools but have voluntarily integrated into the state education system. Proprietors are responsible for capital works, while the state assumes responsibility for all recurrent costs. Schools are required to comply with curricular requirements.

percent of the time, is provided in *kura kaupapa Māori*, *kura ā iwi*, *kura motuhake*, *wharekura,* and in *rumaki* units embedded in English-medium schools.[c] In 2020, about 2 percent of all primary and secondary school students were enrolled in Level 1 immersion.[6]

Some schools, in partnership with their local communities, make provisions for learning in a Pacific Islands language—most often Samoan—for all or some of the time. Pacific-medium education is viewed as a way for Pacific communities to maintain their home language, as English becomes the dominant language for many second- or third-generation immigrants.[7] In 2020, just under 0.4 percent of all primary and secondary school students were learning in some level of Pacific-medium education.[8]

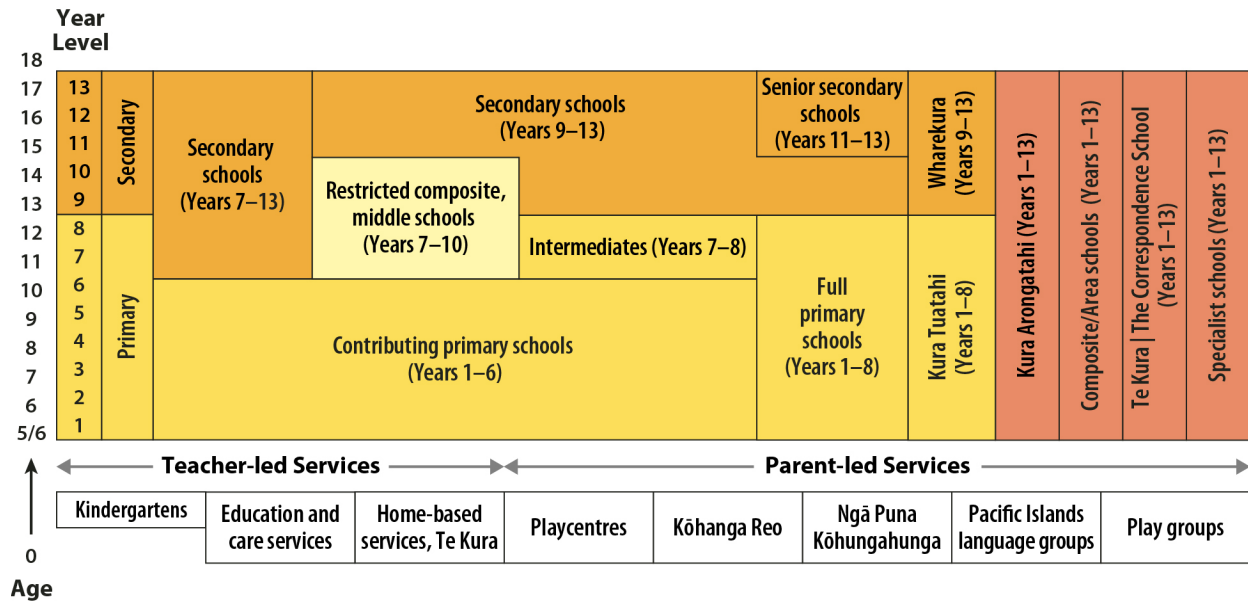## Structure of the Education System

Exhibit 1 shows the structure of New Zealand's early childhood education and school sectors. Early childhood education refers to the education and care of children as young as infants through school entry age. It is delivered by private or community-based providers, either teacher-led or parent-led. Both types of providers receive large subsidies from the government.[9] Services coordinated and led by qualified teachers include community Kindergartens, education and care services, preschools,[d] and home-based services. Parent-led services are licensed (or certified) and involve parents and family members/caregivers as the educators and caregivers of their children. While early childhood education is not compulsory, most children attend a service before starting primary school.[e,10]

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[c]  *Kura kaupapa Māori* and *wharekura* adhere to Māori pedagogy and worldview being integral to the delivery of the curriculum.

[d]  Preschools are attached to independent schools, caring for children ages 2 to 5.

[e]  Ninety-four percent of children who began primary school from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, previously had been enrolled in some form of early childhood education program. See https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/participation for more information.

**Exhibit 1: Structure of New Zealand's Early Childhood and Schooling Sectors[11]**

| Year Level | Age |
|---|---|

The following is a complex structural diagram. I will render it as an image reference:



Schooling in New Zealand spans 13 years from entry at Year 1 to Year 13, with attendance compulsory from ages 6 to 16. However, most children begin primary schooling on or soon after their fifth birthday. Since the beginning of 2020, schools could opt to enforce a cohort entry policy where children would start school either on the first day of a term or at a midpoint during a term.

Primary education spans eight years from entry at Year 1 to Year 8. Almost all students in primary school progress to each year level automatically (i.e., social promotion), although in special circumstances students may be promoted or held back a year. Most primary schools are coeducational.

Secondary education spans five years, Year 9 to Year 13. Most children are 13 years old when they begin secondary school. New Zealand secondary schools are comprehensive in that they do not make a distinction between academic or vocational/technical programs. Single-sex education is more prevalent in secondary schools than in primary schools, although most secondary school students are enrolled in coeducational schools.

Private or independent schools are run by religious or philosophical organizations or by private individuals and may be coeducational or single sex. Fully registered independent schools receive partial funding from the central government.[f] In 2020, just under 4 percent of all primary and secondary school students were enrolled in independent schools, mostly at the secondary level.[12]

Communities of Learning | *Kāhui Ako* are groups of education and training providers that collaborate on shared goals and identified achievement challenges, and share teaching capability and expertise, usually across more than one level of education. They are provided with operational

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[f] From 2013 to 2018, Partnership schools (charter schools) were able to be established to deliver education to mostly disadvantaged students. In 2019, these schools applied and were approved to become part of the wider state school system.

funding and staffing support. Early learning services, primary and secondary schools, and postsecondary education providers can all be involved.[13]

## Specialist Education

Specialist education in New Zealand is an inclusive system designed to support early childhood services and schools to teach students who have physical or psychological disabilities, vision or hearing impairment, or communication or behavioral difficulties. Most students with high or very high learning needs receive individualized funding, support, and specialist teaching to enable them to attend their local schools. There is provision for students who are unable to be accommodated within the regular schooling system to be educated in day or residential specialist schools.[14,15]

## Use and Impact of PIRLS

Participation in international assessment studies has been a key feature of New Zealand's system level evaluation framework since the early 1970s when it took part in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)'s Six Subject Survey, followed by the Second International Mathematics Study (SIMS) in the early 1980s. However, the cyclical nature of more recent studies beginning with the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995, followed by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000 and then PIRLS in 2001, has highlighted their value for monitoring the "health" of the New Zealand education system and for informing education policy and practice.[16,17] These international studies have been invaluable for examining equity in New Zealand's education provision. For example, PIRLS has contributed to a greater understanding of achievement and inequitable outcomes for Māori and Pacific students.[18,19]

As well as being able to benchmark student performance, PIRLS also has informed the Ministry of Education's policy work in English-medium settings. To date, the utility of PIRLS for informing literacy learning in Māori-medium settings has been minimal. Most Māori-medium students are learning Māori as a second language. Because it takes time for second language learners to acquire academic language proficiency in a second language, Year 5 Māori-medium students are generally not at a stage in their language development where an assessment with reading demands such as PIRLS is able to provide meaningful information about their achievement.[20,21]

The Ministry of Education's Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis program, a series of syntheses that draw national and international research together for the purpose of informing education policy and practice, has used findings from PIRLS.[22] PIRLS also contributed to knowledge supporting the Reading Together® program of workshops, designed to help parents and caregivers support their children's reading at home, and provided evidence justifying the funding of this program.

A recent comparison of instruction practices across English-language countries using PIRLS 2016 data also provided insight on the literacy readiness of New Zealand children at school

entry in addition to approaches used in the other jurisdictions when teaching reading at school entry. This was used as background for the development of the *Ready to Read Phonics Plus* instructional series used at school entry.[23]

The Ministry of Education currently is undertaking a refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum, starting with a strategy for mathematics and literacy as foundational areas of learning.[24] This work is informed in part by data from PIRLS (among other international studies and its national monitoring program) that demonstrated a comparative decline in the achievement of New Zealand students over time.[25]

## The Language/Reading Curriculum in Primary Grades

The national curriculum is the official policy for teaching, learning, and assessment in New Zealand's state and state integrated schools and comprises two documents. *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the guide for English-medium teaching and learning, was introduced in late 2007 and was implemented fully at the beginning of 2010. *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, the partner document for Māori-medium teaching and learning, was introduced in late 2008 and was implemented fully at the beginning of 2011.[g] The two documents were developed independently and are not translations of each other. However, they share the same goals, with each document articulating a guiding vision for the educational outcomes for New Zealand's learners followed by descriptions of the competencies and skills students from school entry through Year 13 need to develop. The documents also outline values and attitudes that schools are to encourage and model. *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* additionally identifies the role of the Māori language in accessing Māori culture, the Māori world, and living confidently as Māori. Both documents are currently under review as part of a broader program to refresh New Zealand's curriculum.[26]

Both documents set out broad objectives for each learning area (subject) throughout eight progressive levels of achievement; there are no specific objectives for students at a particular year (grade) level. Each of Levels 1 to 5 equates to about two years of learning, and the higher levels—Levels 6 to 8—equate to about one year. Many students, however, do not fit this pattern of learning (e.g., students with learning support needs and those who are gifted). When implementing the curriculum, schools are expected to choose achievement objectives that meet the learning needs of individual students. The learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum* are: English, the arts, health and physical education, learning languages, mathematics and statistics, science, social sciences, and technology. In *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, they are: *Te Reo Māori*, *Pāngarau* (mathematics), *Pūtaiao* (science), *Hangarau* (technology), *Tikanga-ā-iwi* (social science), *Ngā Toi*

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[g]  During 2010 and 2011, national standards for literacy and mathematics for each year of primary schooling (Years 1 to 8) were introduced into both English-medium and Māori-medium settings to concur with full implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, respectively. They were in place when PIRLS 2016 was implemented. The requirement for schools to use and report on national standards was removed in 2018.

(the arts), *Hauora* (health and well-being), *Te Reo Pākehā* (English), and the optional learning strand of *Ngā Reo* (languages).

## Reading Policy

Fundamental both to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, literacy is viewed as crucial to meeting the reading and writing demands of all learning areas. For example, *The New Zealand Curriculum* currently acknowledges that for each learning area, students need to learn:[27]

- The specialist vocabulary associated with the area
- How to read and understand its texts
- How to communicate knowledge and ideas in appropriate ways
- How to listen and read critically, assessing the value of what they hear and read

## Summary of the National Curriculum

Currently, the English and Māori language learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* respectively provide the setting for most literacy instruction. English is structured around two interconnected strands: Listening, Reading, and Viewing; and Speaking, Writing, and Presenting. Broad achievement objectives in each strand relate to:

- Text purposes and audiences
- Ideas within language contexts
- Language features that enhance text
- The structure and organization of texts

The achievement objectives are formulated to show the "ideal" progress students make as they move from Level 1 after two years of primary school to Level 8 at the end of secondary school. The expectation is that students will be at Level 4 at the end of primary school (Year 8). Specific indicators of success support each objective. Exhibit 2 provides a summary of the Ideas Within Language Contexts achievement objectives along with some examples of indicators for meeting the objective.

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**Exhibit 2: Summary of The New Zealand Curriculum English Language Learning Area: Ideas Within Language Contexts Achievement Objectives[28]**

| English Language Learning Area: Ideas Within Language Contexts | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Level 1 Objective** | **Level 2 Objective** | **Level 3 Objective** | **Level 4 Objective** |
| Students will recognize and identify ideas within and across texts. | Students will show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts. | Students will show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts. | Students will show an increasing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts. |
| **Some of the indicators that the objective has been achieved** | | | |
| Students:<br>▪ Understand that personal experience can influence the meaning gained from texts<br>▪ Make meaning of texts by identifying ideas in some texts | Students:<br>▪ Use their personal experience and world and literacy knowledge to make meaning from texts<br>▪ Make meaning of increasingly complex texts by identifying main ideas<br>▪ Make and support inferences from texts with some independence | Students:<br>▪ Use their personal experience and world and literacy knowledge confidently to make meaning from texts<br>▪ Make meaning of increasingly complex ideas by identifying main and subsidiary ideas in them<br>▪ Start to make connections by thinking about underlying ideas in and between texts | Students:<br>▪ Make meaning of increasingly complex texts by identifying and understanding main and subsidiary ideas and the links between them<br>▪ Make connections by thinking about underlying ideas within and between texts from a range of contexts<br>▪ Make and support inferences from texts with increasing independence |

Underpinning the knowledge, skills, and understandings are processes and strategies demonstrated by students that highlight the learning progression, as Exhibit 3 shows. At all levels, students are expected to select and read texts for enjoyment and personal fulfillment.

The indicators of progression are elaborated upon further in *Literacy Learning Progressions* and the (online) *Learning Progression Frameworks*, which are professional tools for teachers to support the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum. Literacy Learning Progressions*, for example, describes the progression from one schooling year to the next (e.g., Year 5 to 6) by alerting teachers to what students need to know and should be able to do at each year level if they are to engage with the texts and tasks from across the curriculum.[29,30]

**Exhibit 3: Summary of _The New Zealand Curriculum_ English Language Learning Area: Processes and Strategies**

| English Language Learning Area: Processes and Strategies | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Level 1 Objective** | **Level 2 Objective** | **Level 3 Objective** | **Level 4 Objective** |
| Students will acquire and begin to use sources of information, processes, and strategies to identify, form, and express ideas. | Students select and use sources of information, processes, and strategies with some confidence to identify, form, and express ideas. | Students will integrate sources of information, processes, and strategies with developing confidence to identify, form, and express ideas. | Students will integrate sources of information, processes, and strategies confidently to identify, form, and express ideas. |
| **Some of the indicators that the objective has been achieved** | | | |
| Students:<br>• Have an awareness of the connections between oral, written, and visual language<br>• Use sources of information (meaning, structure, visual, and graphophonic information) and prior knowledge to make sense of a range of texts<br>• Associate sounds with letter clusters as well as individual letters; use processing and some comprehension strategies with some confidence<br>• Are developing the ability to think critically about texts | Students:<br>• Recognize connections between oral, written, and visual language<br>• Select and use sources of information (meaning, structure, visual, and graphophonic information) and prior knowledge with growing confidence to make sense of increasingly varied and complex texts<br>• Use an increasing knowledge of letter clusters, affixes, roots, and compound words to confirm predictions<br>• Select and use processing and an increasing range of comprehension strategies with some understanding and confidence<br>• Think critically about texts with some confidence | Students:<br>• Recognize and understand the connections between oral, written, and visual language<br>• Integrate sources of information and prior knowledge with developing confidence to make sense of more complex texts<br>• Select and use a range of processing and comprehension strategies with growing understanding and confidence<br>• Think critically about texts with developing confidence | Students:<br>• Recognize and understand the connections between oral, written, and visual language<br>• Integrate sources of information and prior knowledge confidently to make sense of increasingly varied and complex texts<br>• Select and use appropriate processing and comprehension strategies with increasing understanding and confidence<br>• Think critically about texts with increasing understanding and confidence |

In _Te Marautanga o Aotearoa_, the Māori language learning area is structured around three strands: _ā-Waha_ (Oral), _ā-Tā_ (Written), and _ā-Tinana_ (Body/Paralinguistic Language). Three overarching aims, as described for the reading standards, interweave across the three strands: _Āheinga Reo_ (language functions, or the purposes for which language is used and understanding

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reasons for exchanging ideas); *Puna Reo* (language knowledge, or the expansion and use of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and phraseology); and *Rautaki Reo* (language strategies).

Because of the wide range of Māori language proficiency among children entering immersion settings, four proficiency levels at curriculum Level 1 are used to evaluate the appropriate starting point for each learner. Exhibit 4 shows the literacy characteristics of students at Level 1 and an overview of the progression to fluency at Level 4.

**Exhibit 4: Summary of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* Māori Language Learning Area (English Language Version)[31]**

| TMoA Māori Language Learning Area Learner Characteristics at the Beginning of Level 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *He Pīpī* (Limited Proficiency) | *He Kaha* (Conversational Proficiency) | *He Kaha Ake* (Moderate Proficiency) | *He Pakari* (Higher Proficiency) |
| The learner with limited proficiency can talk about different things within the context of his/her own knowledge base. He/she has little, if any, speaking ability in Māori; his/her writing ability is limited to scribbling or making patterns; and he/she has very little experience with books and written language. | The learner with conversational proficiency can use words and short sentences to meet his/her needs, and is able to understand simple speech, but is not yet very fluent speaking. He/she is becoming familiar with text but does not necessarily read the words, focusing instead on what the text may be about. | The learner with moderate proficiency uses simple sentences and asks simple questions; understands conversational language; and knows how to form words. He/she recognizes the relationships between sound and letters; can follow language examples; and understands that writing, letters, words, phrases, and sentences all have a purpose. He/she can read to understand the main purpose of the text. | The learner with higher proficiency speaks Māori with ease and understands spoken Māori. He/she is able to link sounds to letters and words, and reads for understanding. The learner is able to write simple sentences, possibly with some errors. He/she interacts easily with others in Māori because of his/her strong language skills. |
| Reading-specific outcomes by the end of Level 1 | | | |
| The learner:<br>▪ Understands that written and visual text is created by someone<br>▪ Recognizes the relationship between sound and letters/words<br>▪ Understands the directional nature of text—left to right, top to bottom | The learner:<br>▪ Understands that a word can retain its meaning when written in various texts<br>▪ Uses pictures and punctuation to gain meaning from text and is able to follow text correctly when reading for meaning<br>▪ Understands that punctuation and spacing between words serve a purpose; constructs meaning from text and is able to follow text correctly when reading for meaning | The learner:<br>▪ Knows why he/she likes some stories and visual language<br>▪ Can identify particular words when they appear in different contexts<br>▪ Uses letter and sound knowledge to read and spell common words<br>▪ Rereads in order to correct errors<br>▪ Links personal experiences to text and speech as a strategy for gaining meaning | The learner:<br>▪ Applies personal experiences to bring meaning to text<br>▪ Understands that ideas and knowledge expressed in text are those of the writer or illustrator<br>▪ Attempts to gain meaning from new words in a text<br>▪ Self-corrects some reading and writing errors<br>▪ Uses personal experience and knowledge of text characteristics to gain meaning |

| TMoA Māori Language Learning Area Learner Characteristics at the Beginning of Level 1 |
|---|
| By the end of Level 2—The learner has an awareness of the purpose of a text and its audience. His/her range of vocabulary is increasing along with understanding how words are used. He/she uses language strategies and is able to explain these strategies to produce and understand language and uses strategies to look for meaning in unfamiliar texts. The learner sometimes reads silently. |
| By the end of Level 3—The learner can identify features of many forms of written and visual language; the range of vocabulary is increasing, as well as usage, and he/she understands some technical/specialist words. He/she reads silently or aloud according to preference; uses a range of strategies to establish the meaning of various texts and visual language; and is starting to use research strategies. |
| By the end of Level 4—The learner will understand the differences between a reader's perspective and a writer/illustrator's perspectives; understands and uses descriptive and comparative phrases to enhance a topic; can spell new words correctly; and follows the rules of grammar. He/she can use some research strategies for a range of purposes and is able to process and adapt information. |

## Reading Instruction in the Primary Grades

Neither *The New Zealand Curriculum* nor *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (TMoA) specify time allocations for reading instruction, but all schools are required to offer a balanced curriculum. School principals and teaching staff are responsible for interpreting the curriculum, determining the most appropriate approaches for teaching students, and selecting instructional materials for reading and other subject areas. Results from PIRLS 2016 showed that the estimated average time spent on formal and informal reading in Year 5 was about 24 percent of the total instruction time during the course of the school year.[32]

## Instructional Materials

The Ministry of Education's *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8* have been the principal handbooks for teachers to use in developing their literacy programs in English-medium primary school settings since publication in 2003 and 2006.[33,34] They set out the theoretical basis for effective literacy teaching practice in English-medium settings. These handbooks also underpin other key professional resources for use in literacy programs: *Literacy Learning Progressions, English Language Learning Progressions Years 1–4, Years 5–8,* which provide a nationally consistent set of progressions for learning the English language, and *Learning Through Talk*, an oral English language resource for Years 1 to 3 and Years 4 to 8. The Ministry of Education currently is looking into a coherent up-to-date package of literacy guidance, resources, and tools.

The Ministry of Education (through a contracted supplier) publishes and distributes an extensive range of reading materials and classroom resources in English, Māori, and Pacific Island languages free of charge to state and state integrated schools. Several private New Zealand publishers also produce a range of high-quality reading texts and supporting aids for teachers. Exhibit 5 presents examples of instructional materials used in Years 1 to 8.

**Exhibit 5:  Examples of Instructional Materials**

| Instructional Series | Year Level | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Ready to Read** | Years 1–3 | ▪ The Ready to Read series consists of *Ready to Read Phonics Plus* and *Ready to Read Colour Wheel* books. The content of the texts reflects the lives and interests of New Zealand children.<br>▪ *Ready to Read Phonics Plus* books focus on decoding and word recognition alongside building language comprehension knowledge and skills.<br>▪ *Ready to Read Colour Wheel* books focus more on helping children to make meaning and think critically.<br>▪ Teacher support materials, including audio files, are online. |
| **Junior Journal** | Year 3 | ▪ Designed for use alongside the Ready to Read texts for students at the upper fluency levels, bridges student reading from individual instructional books to the assortment of texts in the School Journal. |
| **School Journal** | Years 4–8 | ▪ Aligned to curriculum Levels 2, 3, and 4, the magazine-style publication includes a mix of fiction and nonfiction material.<br>▪ The teacher support materials that accompany certain issues describe how they can be used for different instructional purposes in at least two curriculum areas and provide suggestions for purposeful teaching. |
| ***Ngā Kete Kōrero*** | For emergent to fluency stages | ▪ The core program of sequential early readers and support materials designed for children from emergent to fluency stages who are learning to read in Māori. |
| ***He Purapura*** | Years 1–4 | ▪ A series of graded readers |
| ***He Kohikohinga*** | Years 4–6 | ▪ A collection of traditional and contemporary stories |
| ***Tāiki E!*** | Years 3–8 | ▪ Magazine style |

## Professional Development Requirements and Programs

Teachers in New Zealand schools must have a practicing certificate to be employed in a teaching position; the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand maintains a register of all certified teachers. Practicing certificates are issued for three years. To have these renewed, teachers are expected to comply with the Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession, which includes a standard that they must engage in professional learning and apply this learning in practice.[35,36]

Most professional learning and development (PLD) takes place in schools, and schools are responsible for ensuring teachers participate regularly. Regionally allocated PLD decisions are made by local panels of sector representatives based on needs identified in each region.[37] Regionally allocated PLD is required to align with one or more of the PLD priorities. In 2018 and

2019, the national priorities for regionally allocated PLD were mathematics, science, reading and writing, and digital fluency. In 2020, the priorities were updated to cultural capability, local curriculum design, and assessment for learning. Digital fluency also remained a priority.[38,39]

Practicing teachers have various professional development opportunities that range from one-day seminars and workshops to part-time master's degree programs.[40]

## Monitoring Student Progress in Reading

While there is no form of national testing in New Zealand, system level monitoring is used to provide an overview of achievement at two points of schooling: Year 4 and Year 8. The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) is aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and was first implemented in 2012 to replace the National Education Monitoring Project, which ran from 1995 to 2009. As part of its program of assessment, reading comprehension in English was assessed at Years 4 and 8 in 2014 and 2019.

In the school sector, state and state integrated schools are required to have assessment policies in accordance with the *National Administration Guidelines*, a set of expectations published by the Ministry of Education for boards of trustees through school principals and teachers.[41] One of these guidelines states that schools should gather information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the progress and achievement of students to be evaluated. Specifically, the guidelines require schools to evaluate student progress and achievement through the analysis of good quality assessment information, giving priority to literacy and numeracy.

The Ministry of Education does not mandate the use of any particular assessment tool, although a number of assessment tools—including norm-referenced tools—are available to teachers. In 2015, the Ministry of Education released the Curriculum Progress Tools (the Progress and Consistency Tool and the *Learning Progression Frameworks*) to support English-medium teachers as they make judgments of student progress and achievement.[42] Exhibit 6 summarizes the range of assessment tools and tasks that are available to teachers as part of their assessment practice.

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**Exhibit 6: Examples of Assessment Tools for Monitoring Individual Student Progress in Reading**

| Assessment Tool | Year Level | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Alphabet Test, Gough Kastler Roper Phonemic Awareness Test, and (Adapted) Bryant Test**[43] | Years 1–3 | ▪ Assesses children's knowledge of letters, the relationship between letter-sounds and any gaps in their knowledge, and being able to blend and manipulate sounds of speech. |
| **Running Records and *Pūkete/Pānui Haere***[44] | Years 1–3 | ▪ Standardized procedures for recording students' oral reading performance; a diagnostic tool. Data collected on running word error rate, accuracy, and self-correction across a range of text difficulty levels.<br>▪ *Pūkete Pānui Haere* provides a running record assessment in Māori. |
| **The Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR) Test**[45] | Years 3–9 | ▪ Standardized; either individual or groups of students; pencil and paper, norm-referenced diagnostic tool to examine students' progress in several aspects of reading (including word recognition, sentence comprehension, paragraph comprehension, and vocabulary range). |
| **Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs)**[46] **in Reading** | Years 4–10 | ▪ Standardized; individual or groups of students; assesses reading comprehension; available online or pencil and paper (manual or online marking). All tests are norm-referenced, enabling teachers to make valid and reliable comparisons between their students and samples of students. Test scores convert to scale scores. |
| **e-Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (e-asTTLe)**[47] | Years 4–12 | ▪ Standardized; usually with groups of students; web-based or pencil and paper; available in English and Māori; reading comprehension aligned to *The NZC/TMoA*. The results are analyzed using norm-referenced and nationally moderated criteria. Student scores reported as scale scores. |

*Pānui Haere* is an assessment tool designed to work with the *Ngā Kete Kōrero* series of books for students across all of primary school. The series was updated in 2020, including narrowing gaps between levels so that student progress in reading could be gauged more clearly.[48,49,50]

## Special Reading Initiatives

A consolidation of research on the importance of home-school partnerships has highlighted effective interventions that promote greater synergy between schools and parents/*whānau* (family).[51] Reading Together® is an example of a family-based program that has been effective in raising the reading achievement of students. It is aimed at building a connection between parents and the school and works best when delivered to groups whose children vary in reading level; it is designed to complement, rather than replace, classroom teaching. The program is available for all schools, but priority is given to those implementing it as part of a Community of Learning | *Kāhui Ako* and to approved community-based providers.[52,53,54]

The Alan Duff Charitable Foundation's Duffy Books in Homes program is another example of a literacy program that serves socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Established in 1995, it provides books to children in schools and early childhood centers with the aim of breaking the cycle of "booklessness" for children in these communities. Education providers work in partnership with financial sponsors throughout the year to provide the books and organize activities that encourage positive reading attitudes and behaviors among children.[55]

The challenges of providing support for students with learning needs such as dyslexia were brought to the forefront when the New Zealand House of Representative's Education and Science Select Committee undertook an inquiry into the identification and support mechanisms for students with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorders. In its 2016 report, the Committee made 46 recommendations, 45 of which were accepted by the government in early 2017, that included better options for early identification of dyslexia and dyspraxia.[56,57] The inquiry also called for an improved range of supports for students with moderate needs who did not qualify for the most intensive support.

One key outcome from the report is the Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025.[58] While the plan takes a broad view of learning support needs, it has provided schools with a suite of resources to support children with dyslexia-type traits, including *The New Zealand Dyslexia Handbook*[59] and teaching resources for both English-medium and Māori-medium settings.[60] The online guide *Dyslexia and Learning*[61] also provides resources for schools and teachers on, for example, understanding dyslexia and literacy acquisition.

Reading Recovery® has been used for many years as a one-to-one intervention supporting learners who have not progressed with their peers after a year of school. An evaluation of the program led to an extension of the program from supporting individual children to developing literacy capability and culture within schools.[62] Beginning in 2021, the extended program, Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Support,[63] now delivers support at three levels: It supports class teachers to provide effective early literacy approaches to all learners; it provides targeted group support for children who are not progressing in literacy after their first term of school; and it provides one-to-one support for those children still not progressing after a full year of school until they are able to read alongside their peers. It also incorporates the *Ready to Read Phonics Plus* early reader series,[64] a recent addition to the existing Ready to Read series, that focuses more on word recognition knowledge and skills, decoding, and sight recognition of familiar words, while building language comprehension.

Currently (2021 to 2023), the Ministry of Education is funding Better Start Literacy Approach (BSLA) professional support, developed and delivered by the Child Well-being Research Institute at the University of Canterbury | *Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha*.[65] BSLA is an integrated classroom literacy approach to support children's early reading, writing, and oral language development. Using *Ready to Read Phonics Plus* texts, it focuses on the link between spoken and written language,

systematically supporting children's phonological and phonemic awareness, word reading and spelling, letter-sound knowledge, and oral language.

## Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

The New Zealand government's first key response to the COVID-19 pandemic occurred on March 19, 2020, when it closed the borders to all but New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. After introducing a 4-tiered alert level system (1 being the lowest and 4 the highest) and declaring a State of National Emergency for all New Zealand, it moved to Alert Level 4 from March 26 to April 27, 2020, resulting in the country going into a full lockdown. Restrictions gradually eased, and by June 8, 2020, New Zealand moved to Alert Level 1. After some respite, Auckland, New Zealand's most populous region with about one-third of all schools, moved back to Level 3 in August 2020 and then again in mid-February and early March 2021. All New Zealand entered another two-week Level 4 lockdown period in August 2021; regional Auckland remained in lockdown conditions until November 17, at which point all schools reopened.

As of December 3, 2021, New Zealand transitioned to a "traffic light" framework, which operates with fewer restrictions and relies on a high level of vaccination (90 percent).[66] Schools are open under all levels of this new system. National surveys have shown that registered teachers, teacher aides, and other staff at schools/*kura* have a vaccination rate of at least 95 percent.[67]

### Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic[68]

During the lockdowns, the Ministry of Education supported teaching and learning in both English and Māori mediums through the provision of "hard packs" (e.g., workbooks, books, and stationery) for students at all levels of schooling to supplement resources from schools and launched teacher-led television programming for students. It funded temporary household internet connections and provided devices for Years 9 to 13 students. Teacher-led television in English also was broadcast to Pacific Islands nations, including the Cook Islands and Fiji, to support their lockdown arrangements. Schools also provided devices for over 16,000 students from their own supplies.

The Ministry established an online portal for subject-specific secondary school content and two online learning programs. A professional learning and development support package also was made available to schools so teachers could access the services of professional facilitators for support with online learning.

Two types of hard packs were specially designed for students with sensory and high learning needs, while the educational television channels were used by schools for the Deaf through their television site with a New Zealand sign language overlay. Ministry learning support specialists also provided online support to children, their educators, and families during the lockdown periods.

## Impact of the Pandemic on Student Learning

To understand the impact COVID-19 had on student learning, the Education Review Office (ERO) conducted a series of surveys with principals, teachers, and students. It found that student engagement had been notably impacted with lower-than-expected attendance post-lockdown, and older students were not enjoying their learning. Most schools surveyed had explicitly prioritized student well-being over academic learning during the lockdown period.

In terms of achievement, an analysis of end-of-year English-medium achievement data captured from the administration of e-asTTLe found no evidence of moderate or large reductions in learning progress in reading and mathematics. Year 5 students' learning progress in reading in the Auckland region did, however, fall from 2019 to 2020; this was the academic year assessed in PIRLS in New Zealand in 2020.

## Policy and Practice Changes

To ensure the education sector can respond to future emergencies and epidemics, changes to the Education and Training Act 2020 provided a new set of powers for the Secretary of Education, which include being able to direct the governing body of an education entity to provide instruction in specified ways (e.g., through distance or online learning); set restrictions on attendance of students or staff; or open and close completely or partially for physical attendance, instruction, or both.

The Government's COVID-19 Urgent Response Fund also made provision for NZD $50 million during the 2020–2021 financial year to support children and young people's attendance at school, reengagement in learning, and well-being after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Some workstreams have transitioned into business-as-usual processes, and the Ministry continues its preparedness work and providing support and advice around teaching and learning for school principals and teachers.

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