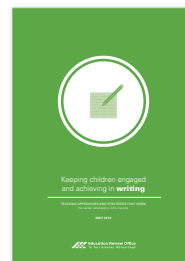


NATIONAL
REPORT
SUMMARY

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This is a summary of a national report – it captures the key points and highlights findings you may find useful. The full report is available on ERO's website – ero.govt.nz

Keeping children engaged and achieving in writing: Teaching strategies that work



This ERO report is part of a series of reports about teaching strategies that work. In Term 4, 2016, ERO visited 40 primary schools across New Zealand. These schools were selected because of increased numbers of children achieving at or above the expected standards as they moved through the upper primary years (Years 5 to 8).

In this report, ERO shares the approaches and strategies of five schools that have been effective in ensuring children continue to make progress in writing throughout their primary years.

Why did ERO focus on writing in the upper primary school?

According to recent National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) reports, many more children in Year 4 than in Year 8 are achieving at the expected curriculum level. In a 2012 report, NMSSA founds that 65 percent of children in Year 4 were performing as expected, while only 35 percent of children in Year 8 performed at the expected level.

The NMSSA study showed student attitudes to writing decline between Year 4 and Year 8. Girls were generally more positive than boys at both year levels, and the difference was similar at both year levels. These disparities were previously also found in the NEMP studies from 1998 to 2006.

The lack of progress from Year 4 to Year 8 could not be attributed to limited access to professional learning and development. The 2012 NMSSA report indicated over 80 percent of Year 4 teachers and 75 percent of Year 8 teachers reported they were involved in professional development and learning focused on writing in the last 12 months.

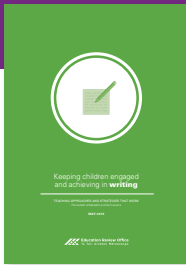
What did ERO find?

In schools where most children were progressing well in writing, teachers were clear about the purpose of writing. They understood all the different writing demands of the curriculum the child would encounter in the near future and were deliberate in their approach to supporting the children to meet those demands.

Children often had writing activities linked to reading or the topic unit the class was focused on. Teachers used every writing opportunity for children to practise the current writing strategies being taught. Pre-writing activities were balanced, interesting and motivating. Teachers deliberately emphasised the craft of writing to help children organise their ideas more logically and coherently.

Writing professional learning and development (PLD) focused on both the teachers' and children's development needs. Teachers participated in





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writing workshops showing the practices they could later use in class. They were provided with actions they could immediately take back to their class. Leaders monitored how well new strategies were implemented and supported teachers needing extra help to improve.

Leaders searched extensively for the PLD or improvement actions teachers needed to improve writing. These improvements focused on such things as word study, how to structure writing, or developing writing through non-fiction contexts.

Leaders limited the number of new strategies trialled to enable them to clearly identify which strategies worked and those they should stop using. They avoided just adding more approaches or assessments without determining which were having the greatest impact on children. Ongoing review of achievement data helped make sure teachers focused on the strategies that worked the best.

Children's perspectives were valued, and they were surveyed or interviewed to help identify their strengths and needs. Children were often really clear about their challenges that limited their progress in writing and what was needed to help them improve.

Challenges identified by children became their writing goals. In the best instances the teacher and the child identified the actions they would each take to help the child meet the goal.

Children's self assessment of their progress and achievement was effectively managed and valued. Children knew what they were currently working on and provided examples of how they had achieved their agreed goals. Parents of children in targeted interventions also usefully contributed to setting and reporting on their child's writing goals.

In the schools where the most progress was made, teachers were energised by their students' success and reported they enjoyed teaching writing more now than in previous years.

ERO reports used in this publication

2017

- » *Extending their language – expanding their world: Children's oral language (birth-8 years)*

2015

- » *Educationally powerful connections with parents and whānau*
- » *Continuity of learning transitions from early childhood services to schools*
- » *Raising student achievement through targeted actions*

2014

- » *Raising achievement in primary schools*
- » *Raising achievement in primary schools: Accelerating Learning in Mathematics (ALiM) and Accelerating Literacy Learning (ALL)*
- » *Managing professional learning and development in primary schools*

2009

- » *Reading and writing in Years 1 and 2*
- » *Managing professional learning and development in primary schools*
- » *Mathematics in Years 4 to 8: developing a responsive curriculum*

