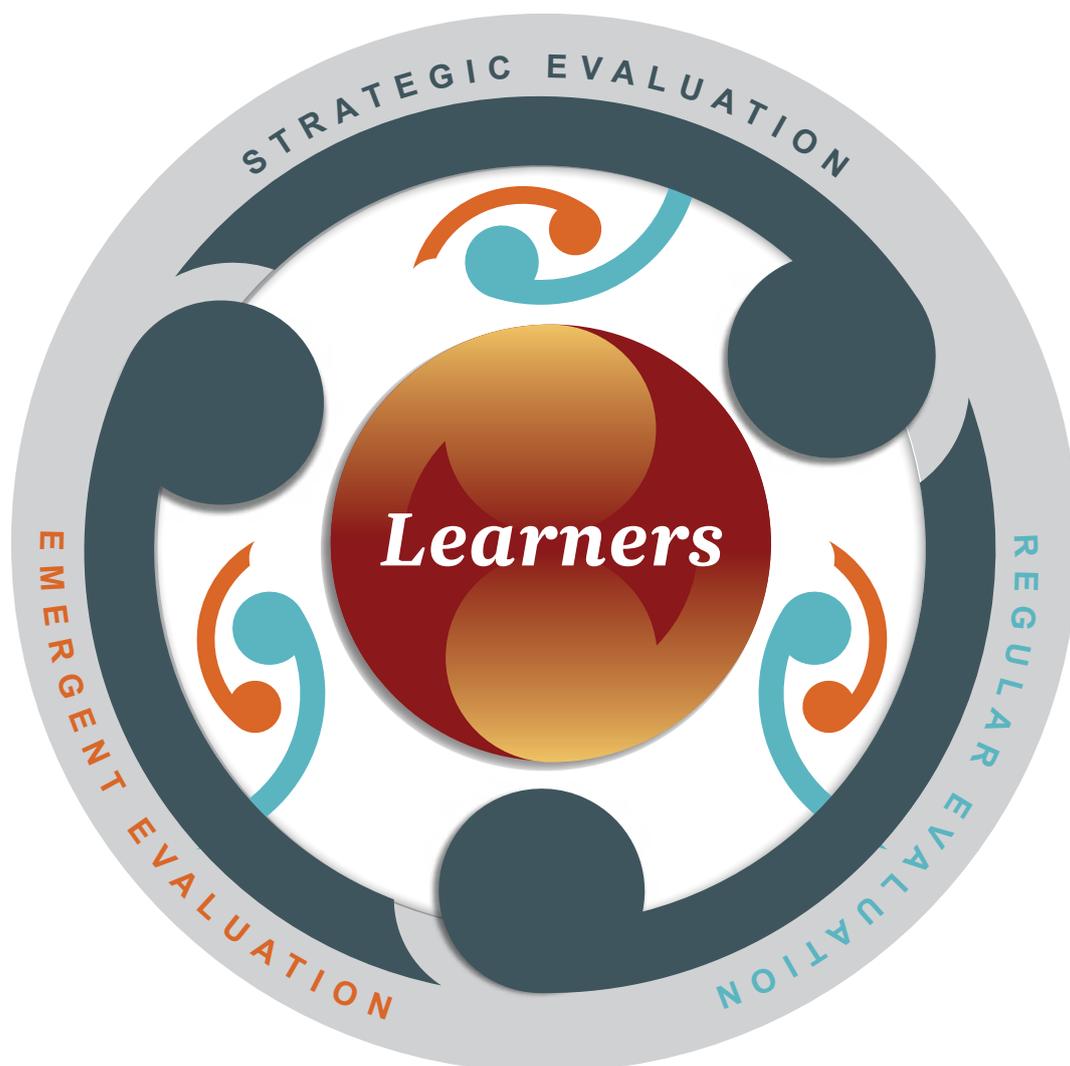


EFFECTIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION

How to do and use internal evaluation for improvement



Effective School Evaluation

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Introduction

This guide to using internal evaluation for improvement purposes is published jointly by ERO and the Ministry of Education as a companion to *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success* and is supported by *Internal Evaluation: Good Practice*.¹ This resource describes what effective internal evaluation is, what it involves, and how to go about it in ways that will enhance educational outcomes for students. It draws on current knowledge about internal evaluation, and on case studies of New Zealand schools that have used internal evaluation to inform the development of strategies that have been successful in raising achievement, particularly that of Māori and Pacific learners. The case study schools also exemplify the use of inquiry processes and evaluative reasoning.

The intention is that this resource will assist English-medium schools and their communities to understand and practise effective evaluation for improvement. It can be used in different ways with different groups.

¹ See www.ero.govt.nz for both publications

How this resource is structured

This resource has five sections.

The first section, **What matters most in schooling**, will help you to understand the framework that underpins the school evaluation indicators. This framework integrates the key learner outcomes highlighted in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* with six domains identified by contemporary research and evaluation studies as being significant influences on school effectiveness and improvement. **Pages 7 to 8**

Engaging in effective internal evaluation identifies three different but related purposes for and approaches to internal evaluation in schools: strategic, regular and emergent. Examples highlight particular features of the different approaches. This section will help you to engage in internal evaluation and understand what is needed to do it well. It highlights the actions you can take to develop the organisational conditions, capability and collective capacity to do and use internal evaluation for improvement purposes. **Pages 9 to 23**

The third section, **School improvement for equity and excellence**, will help you to explore the relationship between internal evaluation and school improvement. It describes the kinds of shifts in practice that some of the case study schools were making as a result of internal evaluation. This section includes examples of improvement in two of the case study schools showing how they used evaluation and reasoning processes to inform their actions, with resulting shifts in practice and positive impacts on student outcomes. **Pages 24 to 38**

The fourth section, **Using the school evaluation indicators to support continuous improvement**, will help you to better understand the relationship between internal and external evaluation and how aligning the two, with the evaluation indicators as a common framework, will support ongoing, sustained improvement in achievement and equity. **Pages 39 to 40**

The final section, **Integrating internal and external evaluation for improvement**, reiterates the value to schools of harmonising their internal evaluation processes with ERO's external evaluations. It supports schools to use their internal evaluation findings to engage with others in their school community and beyond. Domain six of the indicator framework, **Evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building for improvement and innovation**, highlights how organisational conditions and capability influence engagement with external evaluation. **Pages 41 to 43**

Context

School evaluation can be either internal or external; in New Zealand it is both. ERO has mandated responsibility for external reviews while National Administration Guideline 2 explicitly requires every school to:

- > develop a strategic plan which documents how it is giving effect to the National Education Guidelines through its policies, plans and programmes, including those for curriculum, National Standards, assessment, and staff professional development
- > maintain an ongoing programme of self review in relation to the above policies, plans and programmes, including evaluation of information on student achievement.²

The intention is that all schools and their communities should be engaged in an ongoing, cyclical process of internal evaluation and inquiry that is directed at improving educational outcomes for all their students. Effective internal evaluation at a community/cluster/school level also contributes to improving outcomes for learners in the wider community and at a system level.

As used in this guide, the term 'internal evaluation' includes all the activities and processes that schools and their communities engage in to evaluate how effective they are in supporting success for all learners. These include schools' ongoing programme of self-review, planning and reporting processes, and other inquiry and evaluation activities that boards, leaders and teachers engage in for the purposes of accountability and improvement.

The New Zealand Curriculum and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* both position teaching within an inquiry framework and highlight the importance of teachers and leaders having the expertise to inquire into their practice, evaluate the impact, and build knowledge about what works.³

Schools and their communities need to be continuously evaluating the impact of their endeavours on learner outcomes. To do this, they need strong leadership and evaluation expertise. Their systems, processes and resources should support purposeful data gathering, collaborative inquiry and decision making and align closely with the school's vision, values, strategic direction, goals, and equity and excellence priorities.

Using a range of quality achievement data, boards of trustees, leaders and teachers in highly effective schools collaboratively monitor and evaluate the impact of improvement strategies. They are responsive to findings, making changes as necessary, and successful strategies are embedded into school practice so that all learners benefit.

Periodic external evaluation supports this cycle of continuous improvement by bringing an external lens to bear on achievement, the extent to which conditions support improvement, and next steps.

The primary purpose of school evaluation is to achieve equity and excellence in outcomes for all learners.

Effective internal evaluation processes enable trustees, leaders, teachers, parents, families, whānau and the wider school community to better understand:

- > how individual learners and groups of learners are performing in relation to valued outcomes
- > how improvement actions have impacted on learner outcomes and what difference is being made
- > what needs to be changed and what further action needs to be taken
- > the patterns and trends in outcomes over time
- > what kinds of practices are likely to make the most difference for diverse learners and in what contexts
- > the extent to which the improvements achieved are good enough in terms of the school's vision, values, strategic direction, goals, and equity and excellence priorities.

2 Ministry of Education. (2015). *The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs)*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/legislation/nags/>.

3 Timperley, H., & Parr, J. (2010). Evidence, inquiry and standards. In H. Timperley & J. Parr (Eds.), *Weaving evidence, inquiry and standards to build better schools* (pp. 9–23). Wellington: NZCER Press.

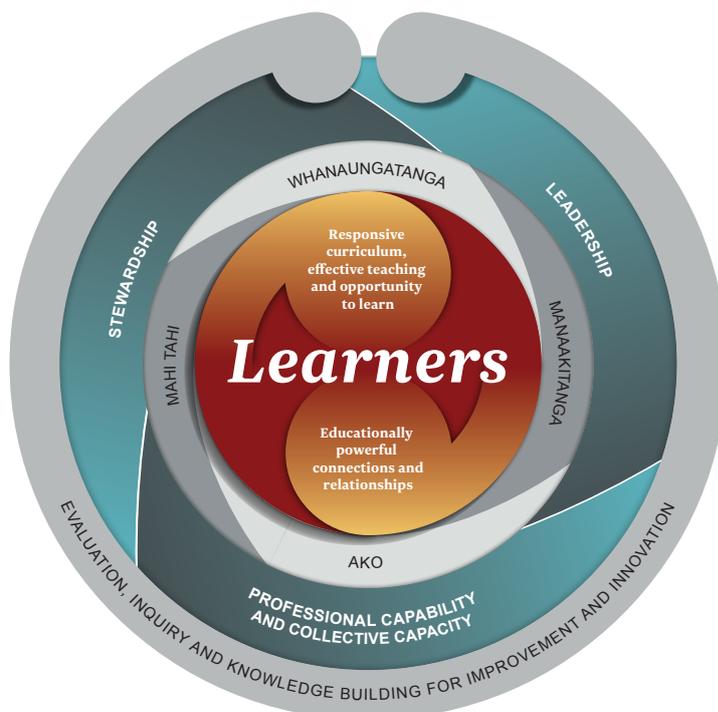
1. What matters most in schooling

The major challenge for the New Zealand education system is achieving equity and excellence in outcomes for an increasingly diverse student population. Although a significant proportion of New Zealand students achieve at the highest levels in core areas such as reading, mathematics and science, our performance in international assessment studies shows persistent achievement disparities, in particular for Māori and Pacific students. Achieving excellence must go hand in hand with achieving equity of education outcomes.

*Equity in education can be seen through two dimensions: fairness and inclusion. Equity as **fairness** implies that personal or socio-economic circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to success in education. Equity as **inclusion** means ensuring that all students reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. Equitable education systems are fair and inclusive, and support their students in reaching their learning potential without either formally or informally erecting barriers or lowering expectations.⁴*

ERO has redeveloped its indicators framework (Figure 1) to highlight six domains that are known to be key influences in improving outcomes for all learners. The aim has been to create a framework that can be used not only by ERO's evaluators, but also by schools to focus their internal evaluation and improvement activities.

FIGURE 1. SCHOOL EVALUATION INDICATORS FRAMEWORK



4 Schleicher, A. (2014). *Equity, excellence and inclusiveness in education: policy lessons from around the world*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. www.oecd.org/publishing

Learners are at the centre of the indicators framework, with the goal being successful, 'confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners' as envisioned by *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*⁵. This means that every young person should leave school:

- > confident in their identity, language and culture as a citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand
- > socially and emotionally competent, resilient and optimistic about the future⁶
- > a successful lifelong learner
- > participating and contributing confidently in a range of contexts (cultural, local, national and global) to shape a sustainable world of the future.⁷

The six domains included in the framework have all been identified by education research studies and analyses of studies as significant influences on school effectiveness and improvement. Two of these domains, **educationally powerful connections and relationships** and **responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn**, have the greatest influence, but all are mutually interdependent.

Research evidence highlights how critical **leadership** is for achieving equity and excellence goals. It falls to leaders to establish the necessary conditions and relational trust, and it is leaders who ensure that teachers have opportunities to collaboratively inquire into, reflect on and evaluate their practice, thereby building **professional capability and collective capacity**.

Entrusted with a **stewardship role**, boards of trustees represent and serve the school community. They have a responsibility to scrutinise student achievement and evaluation information and to maintain a relentless focus on learning, wellbeing, achievement and progress. They must also evaluate their own performance and ensure that they are meeting their accountabilities.

The remaining domain, **evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building**, is the engine that drives **improvement and innovation**.

All education activities take place within a cultural context. For this reason the indicator framework singles out four concepts, **manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, ako** and **mahi tahi**, which have the power to transform the learning environment for students. Together, these concepts challenge teachers to abandon deficit theorising as a way of rationalising failure and to focus instead on how they can change their approach and practices to realise the potential in their students.⁸ See *School Evaluation Indicators – Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success* for an explanation of these concepts.⁹

A school's effectiveness closely correlates with the quality of its practices in all six domains and the extent to which those practices are integrated and coherent.

5 Retrieved from *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* Graduate Profile. Retrieved from <http://www.tmoa.tki.org.nz/Te-Marautanga-o-Aotearoa/Te-Anga/Te-Ahua-o-a-Tatou-Akonga>

6 See Education Review Office (2013). *Wellbeing For Success: Draft Evaluation Indicators for Student Wellbeing*. See also *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) Health and Physical Education.

7 See Bolstad, R., & Gilbert, J., with McDowall, S., Bull, A., Boyd, S., & Hipkins, R. (2012). *Supporting future-oriented teaching and learning – a New Zealand perspective*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/109306>

8 See Bishop, R., O'Sullivan, D., & Berryman, M. (2010). *Scaling up education reform: The politics of disparity*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Education Research.

9 Education Review Office (2015). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

2. Engaging in effective internal evaluation

The whole point of internal evaluation is to assess what is and is not working, and for whom, and then to determine what changes are needed, particularly to advance equity and excellence goals. Internal evaluation involves asking good questions, gathering fit-for-purpose data and information, and then making sense of that information. Much more than a technical process, evaluation is deeply influenced by the school's values and how it sees its role in the community. Effective internal evaluation is always driven by the motivation to improve, to do better for the students.

When internal evaluation is done well, processes are coherent and align with schools' visions and strategic goals. Leaders and teachers work collaboratively across teams, syndicates, departments, faculties and in some cases communities of learning, to ensure that the efforts that go into evaluation lead to improvement. The urgency to improve is shared by all, and can be articulated by all.

Evidence from research and the case study schools shows that there are organisational conditions that support development of the capacity to do and use evaluation for improvement and innovation. These include:

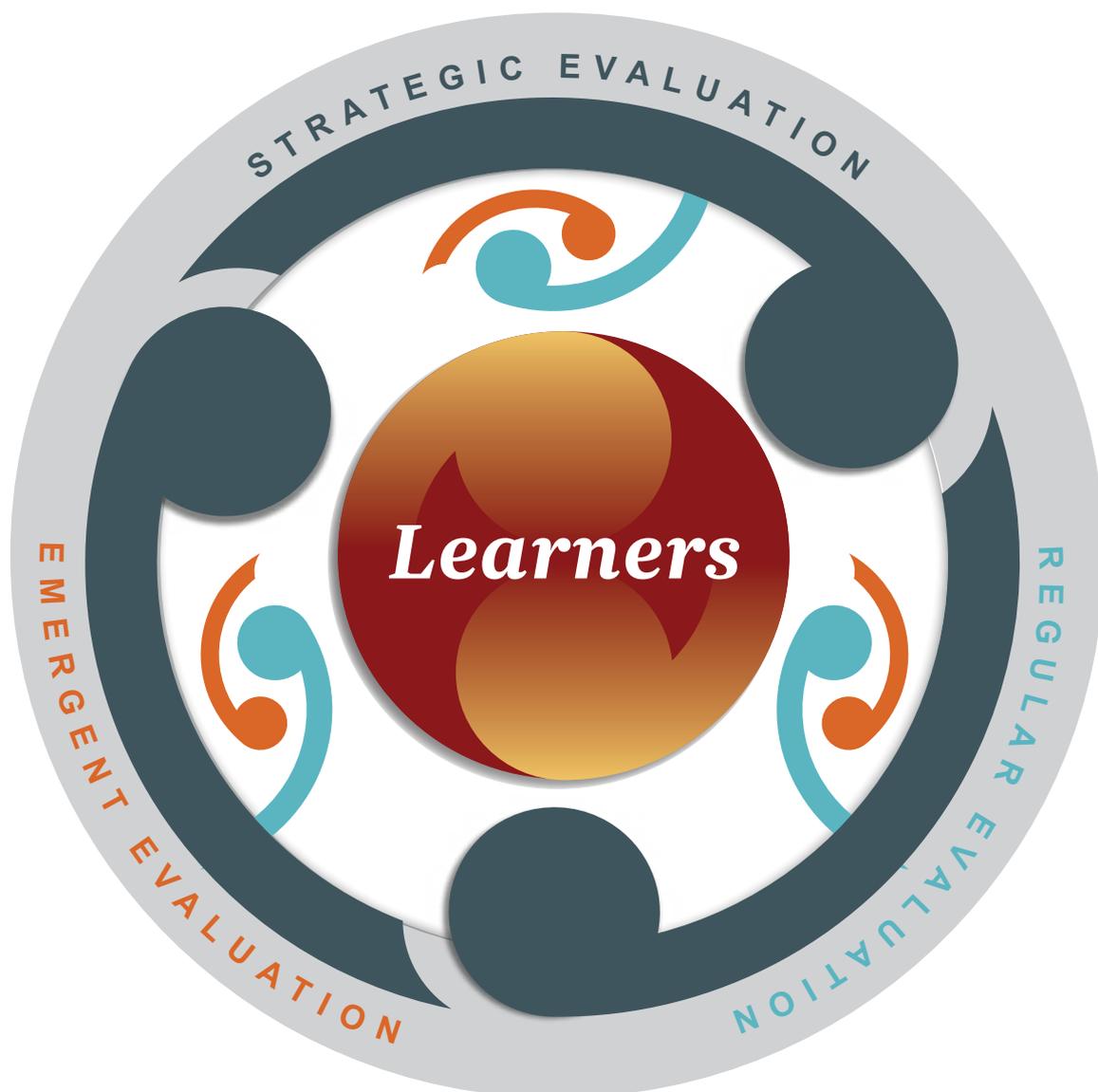
- > evaluation leadership
- > a learning-oriented community of professionals that demonstrates agency in using evaluation for improvement in practice and outcomes
- > opportunity to develop technical evaluation expertise (including access to external expertise)
- > access to, and use of, appropriate tools and methods
- > systems, processes and resources that support purposeful data gathering, knowledge building and decision making.

See the Domain 6 indicators for practices that are characteristic of **effective evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building for improvement and innovation** and Section 3 of this guide for examples of how the conditions, capability and capacity to undertake effective internal evaluation in a school can be developed. Section 6 of this guide emphasises the importance of using the same set of indicators for both internal and external evaluation.

Scope, depth and focus

Internal evaluations vary greatly in scope, depth and focus depending on the purpose and the context. An evaluation may be strategic, linked to vision, values, goals and targets; or it may be a business-as-usual review of, for example, the curriculum or a learning area; or it may be a response to an unforeseen (emergent) event or issue. Figure 2 shows how these different purposes can all be viewed as part of a common improvement agenda.

FIGURE 2. TYPES OF INTERNAL EVALUATION



Strategic evaluation

Strategic evaluations focus on activities related to the vision, values, goals and targets of the school community. They aim to find out to what extent the vision is being realised, goals and targets achieved, and progress made. For boards of trustees and leaders strategic evaluations are a means of answering such key questions as: *To what extent are all our learners experiencing success? To what extent are improvement initiatives making a difference for all learners? How can we do better?* Because strategic evaluations delve into matters that affect the school as a whole, and the wider community, they need to be in-depth and they take time.

A strategic evaluation

An intermediate school and a secondary school decided to adopt a joint approach to engaging with their community. In 2007 and 2011 they carried out extensive community consultation to determine what parents and community members considered important outcomes for their children. The results led to the development of seven strategic goals that were reaffirmed in 2011 and 2013, included in the schools' strategic plans, and incorporated into annual goals and targets.

In the intermediate school, a 'story board' approach is used to report on the annual action plan. The principal's reports to the board use a 'traffic light' system to indicate how the school is tracking in relation to its different strategic goals. This reporting is to a schedule, with one strategic goal as the focus each month. This approach keeps board members informed and supports their decision making.

To monitor progress towards its goals the board seeks regular reports from school leaders, asking *How well are we doing? What evidence of progress do we have? What is working well? What do we need to adjust and why?*

Regular monitoring and reporting enables the board to make resourcing decisions that align with its strategic priorities.

Regular evaluation

Regular (planned) evaluations are business-as-usual evaluations or inquiries, where boards of trustees, leaders and teachers (and, where appropriate, students) gather data, monitor progress towards goals, and assess the effectiveness of programmes or interventions. They ask: *To what extent do our policies and practices promote the learning and wellbeing of all students? How fully have we implemented the policies we have put in place to improve outcomes for all learners? How effective are our strategies for accelerating the progress of target learners?* Business-as-usual evaluations vary in scope and depth and feed back into the school's strategic and annual plans.

A regular evaluation

The social sciences faculty came to evaluate its junior programme as part of its regular review cycle. Feedback from some senior students had highlighted an apparent lack of alignment between the junior and senior curriculums.

The first step was to find out what the students thought about the social sciences curriculum, so faculty staff developed and carried out a survey. But the resulting data was compromised (some students misunderstood questions and some completed the survey too quickly) and did not give staff the necessary depth of information. They then realised that they lacked the technical expertise to design a survey that would tell them what they needed to know.

Deciding that a different approach was needed, staff set up think tank groups that included students from each class. Teachers presented the survey data to the students and, by discussing it, were able to get in-depth answers to the survey questions.

Following the think tanks there was a lot of discussion within the faculty about the philosophy underpinning the current curriculum, the types of assessments used, and what was and was not working. Staff visited other schools to see their programmes and assess the possible relevance for them of the different approaches. A Google Doc was set up to facilitate collaborative redevelopment of the faculty's programme. A framework for planning units was agreed, and responsibilities for specific topics allocated. Much of this work took place at the faculty's regular professional learning meetings.

Because the level 5 social studies achievement objectives (AOs) are very broad, staff developed explicit curriculum links to senior social sciences subjects – links that the students could understand. A benefit of this process was that it required staff to focus closely on the AOs and ask themselves whether they were really meeting those objectives and providing a platform for student achievement in the senior years. Sometime later, when faculty staff conducted a follow-up evaluation, again using a survey and think tank, the response to the changes was overwhelming positive.

Emergent evaluation

Emergent (or spontaneous) evaluations are a response to an unforeseen event or an issue picked up by routine scanning or monitoring. Possible focus questions include: *What is happening? Who for? Is this okay? Should we be concerned? Why? Do we need to take a closer look?* Emergent evaluations arise out of high levels of awareness about what is happening for learners.

An emergent evaluation

Leaders and teachers in a primary school found that samples of student writing gathered at the start of the school year revealed that the writing of 42 percent of year 4–6 students deteriorated over the summer holiday break. This decline in performance was observed across ethnicity, year level and teacher. An analysis of November-to-November data showed the students not making the expected progress. Leaders recognised that they needed to do something differently, but that the school had limited influence over what happened in the holidays.

Thinking about what action they might take to improve the situation the staff did some reading on the ‘summer effect’ but found little of use. So they decided to experiment with an entirely new strategy. This involved collecting a sample of each student’s writing at the end of the year, pasting it into the front of their exercise book at the start of the new year, and then making their final learning intention for the old year their first learning intention for the new year.

Expectations are now set on day one. Teachers refer back to the previous year’s writing sample and discuss with their students the quality of work that is expected of them, emphasising that this is what they are capable of. Leaders ensure that teachers have the student data from the previous year and that they have the time to determine learning strategies for the start of the year. In this way each teacher can start where the previous teacher left off, without the need to reassess students.

In the first year of implementing this strategy the leadership team rigorously monitored writing data and what teachers were doing in their classrooms, ensuring that the students were writing every day. These strategies have worked well. Now, less than 10 percent of students go backwards in their writing over summer. Explicit teaching strategies target this group with the aim of accelerating their progress.

To think about and discuss

- > What is the focus of evaluation in our school community?
- > Do we use all three types of evaluation (strategic, regular and emergent)?
- > In what areas could we improve our understanding and practice of evaluation?
- > How do we ensure that all evaluation supports our school’s vision, values and strategic goals?
- > How do we ensure that all evaluation promotes equitable outcomes for learners?

Processes and reasoning

Internal evaluation requires boards, leaders and teachers to engage in deliberate, systematic processes and reasoning, with improved outcomes for all learners as the ultimate aim.

Those involved collaborate to:

- > investigate and scrutinise practice
- > analyse data and use it to identify priorities for improvement
- > monitor implementation of improvement actions and evaluate their impact
- > generate timely information about progress towards goals and the impact of actions taken.

Figure 3 identifies five interconnected, learner-focused processes that are integral to effective evaluation for improvement.

Figures 4 to 8 unpack each of these processes in terms of the conditions that support their effectiveness, the reasoning involved, and the activities or actions involved.

FIGURE 3. LEARNER-FOCUSED EVALUATION PROCESSES AND REASONING



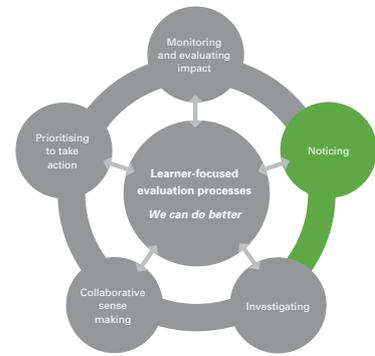


FIGURE 4. NOTICING

<p>When noticing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We maintain a learner focus We are aware of what is happening for all learners We have a deep understanding of <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> We have an 'inquiry habit of mind' We are open to scrutinising our data We see dissonance and discrepancy as opportunities for deeper inquiry 	<p>We ask ourselves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What's going on here? For which learners? Is this what we expected? Is this good? Should we be concerned? Why? What is the problem or issue? Do we need to take a closer look?
<p>Noticing</p>	
<p>Noticing involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scanning Being aware of hunches, gut reactions and anecdotes Knowing when to be deliberate and intentional Recognising the context and focus for evaluation – strategic, regular or emergent 	<p><i>"If the results don't look good we need to be honest about them"</i></p> <p><i>"Knowing what the problem is, is critical"</i></p>

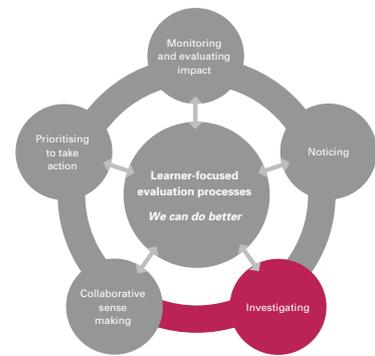


FIGURE 5. INVESTIGATING

<p>When investigating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We focus on what is happening for <i>all</i> our learners We ensure we have sufficient data to help us respond to our questions We check that our data is fit-for-purpose We actively seek students' and parents' perspectives We check we know about all learners in different situations 	<p>We ask ourselves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do we already know about this? How do we know this? What do we need to find out? How might we do this? What 'good questions' should we ask? How will we gather relevant and useful data'?
<p>Investigating involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking stock Bringing together what we already know (data/information) Using existing tools or developing new ones to gather data Identifying relevant sources of data/evidence Seeking different perspectives 	<p><i>"We try and use data from whatever source we can get it"</i></p> <p><i>"We had to know how teachers were teaching writing"</i></p>



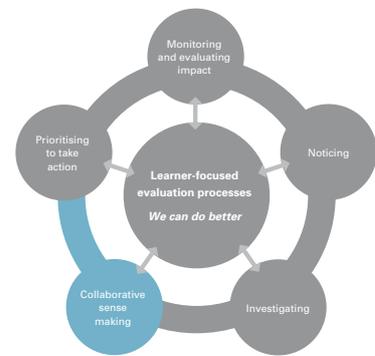


FIGURE 6. COLLABORATIVE SENSE MAKING

When making sense of our data and information

We ensure we have the necessary capability (data literacy) and capacity (people/time)

We are open to new learning

We know ‘what is so’ and have determined ‘so what’

We know what ‘good’ looks like so that we can recognise our strengths and areas for improvement

We have a robust evidence base to inform our decision making and prioritising

We ask ourselves

What is our data telling us/what insights does it provide?

Is this good enough?

How do we feel about what we have found?

Do we have different interpretations of the data? If so, why?

What might we need to explore further?

What can we learn from research evidence about what ‘good’ looks like?

How close are we to that?

Collaborative sense making

Collaborative sense making involves

Scrutinising our data with an open mind

Working with different kinds of data, both quantitative and qualitative

Drawing on research evidence and using suitable frameworks or indicators when analysing and making sense of our data

“We want to know what’s good – and what’s not good enough”

“To effect change, teachers needed to be on board – it was not going to be a two-meeting process”

“What are we doing well? What can we improve on? How can we enrich and accelerate the learning of our students?”



FIGURE 7. PRIORITISING TO TAKE ACTION

When prioritising to take action

- We are clear what problem or issue we are trying to solve
- We understand what we need to improve
- We are determined to achieve equitable progress and outcomes for all students
- We are clear about the actions we need to take and why
- We have the resources necessary to take action
- We have a plan that sets out clear expectations for change

We ask ourselves

- What do we need to do and why?
- What are our options?
- Have we faced this situation before?
- What can we do to ensure better progress and outcomes for more of our learners?
- How big is the change we have in mind?
- Can we get the outcomes we want within the timeframe we have specified?
- What strengths do we have to draw on/build on?
- What support/resources might we need?



Prioritising to take action involves

- Considering possible options in light of the 'what works' evidence
- Being clear about what needs to change and what doesn't
- Identifying where we have the capability and capacity to improve
- Identifying what external expertise we might need
- Prioritising our resources to achieve equitable outcomes

- "Prioritising is based on having capacity – you can't stretch yourself too far"*
- "Everything we have done has been based on the evidence"*
- "We are about wise owls not bandwagons"*
- "Everything we've done has been decided with data, both quantitative and qualitative"*
- "If we keep doing the same things we will keep getting the same results"*

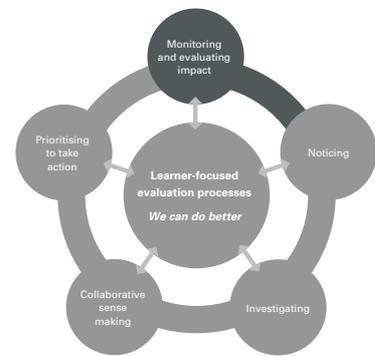


FIGURE 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATING IMPACT

<p>When monitoring and evaluating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We know what we are aiming to achieve We are clear about how we will monitor progress We know how we will recognise progress We are focused on ensuring <i>all</i> learners have equitable opportunities to learn We have the capability and capacity to evaluate the impact of our actions 	<p>We ask ourselves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is happening as a result of our improvement actions? What evidence do we have? Which of our students are/are not benefiting? How do we know? Is this good enough? Do we need to adjust what we are doing? What are we learning? Can we use this learning in other areas?
<p>Monitoring and evaluating impact</p>	
<p>Monitoring and evaluating involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping an eye on the data for evidence of what is/is not working for all learners Having systems, processes and tools in place to track progress and impact Developing progress markers that will help us to know whether we are on the right track Checking in with students and their parents and whānau Knowing when to adjust or change actions or strategies 	<p><i>“Success is still fragile – if you have a group (that is not achieving to expectations) you focus on them and keep focusing on them”</i></p> <p><i>“Results after one year showed a 14 percent upward shift in students achieving at or above the standard”</i></p>

Why not start a discussion about what each of the five evaluation processes might mean in your own school community? This will clarify your thinking about evaluation and evaluation practices and help identify areas where you need to develop greater capability or capacity.

To think about and discuss

- > What processes do we currently use for the purposes of evaluation and review?
- > How do our processes reflect those described above?
- > Which parts of these processes do we do well? How do we know?
- > How might we use the processes described above to improve the quality and effectiveness of our evaluation practice?

Effective evaluation requires us to think deeply about the data and information we gather and what it means in terms of priorities for action. By asking the right questions of ourselves, we will keep the focus on our learners, particularly those for whom current practice is not working. The twin imperatives of excellence and equitable outcomes should always be front and centre whatever it is that we are evaluating.

Organisational conditions and collective capacity

Internal evaluation is most effective when the organisational conditions are supportive and staff members are encouraged to develop the capabilities to do it well. There is no one way of developing these conditions and capabilities, but there are some actions and decisions that are likely to help.

The diagrams that follow (Figures 9 and 10) are based on the experiences of some of the case study schools as they went about developing the conditions and capabilities they needed to engage in effective internal evaluation. Consider using them in your school community to initiate discussion about the extent to which you have practices in place that promote effective evaluation and identify areas for improvement.

To think about and discuss

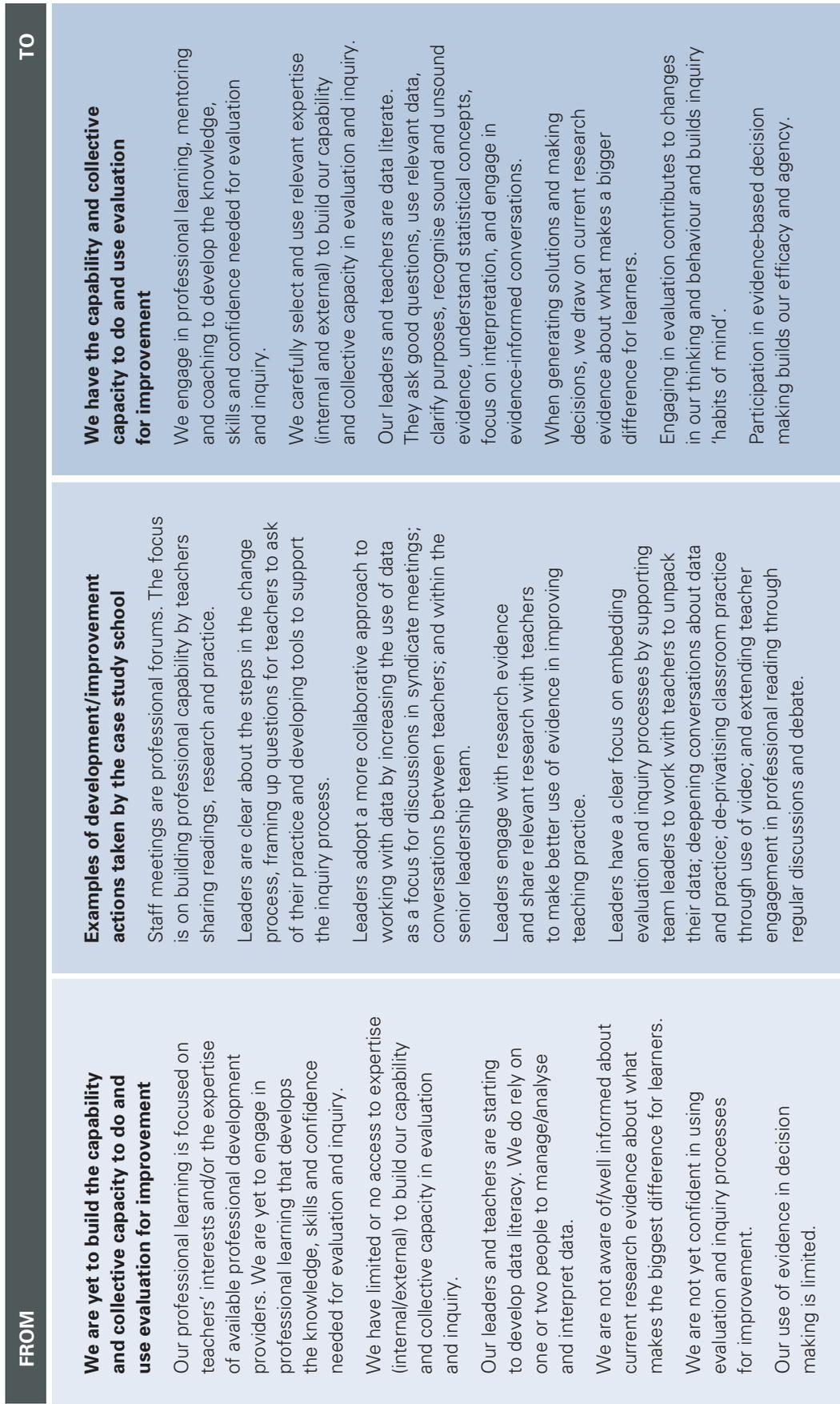
- > To what extent do the organisational conditions in our school community promote evaluation?
- > How well do our policies, systems and practices embed evaluation that contributes to ongoing improvement for all students?
- > To what extent do we have the relational trust needed to support collaboration and risk taking at all levels of the school community?
- > How deliberate are we in using our internal evaluation processes as opportunities for individual and collective professional learning?

FIGURE 9: ORGANISATIONAL CONDITIONS FOR INTERNAL EVALUATION

How can we develop the organisational conditions to support evaluation and inquiry in our school community?



FIGURE 10: CAPABILITY AND COLLECTIVE CAPACITY
How can we build the capability and collective capacity to do and use evaluation for improvement?



3. School improvement for equity and excellence

While every school community's improvement is unique it can be described under these four headings:

- > Context for improvement
- > Improvement actions taken
- > Shifts in practice
- > Outcomes for learners.

Context for improvement

Every context is different. It may be that the appointment of a new principal provides the catalyst for change. It may be that a principal returning from sabbatical with fresh eyes and new thinking is strongly motivated to tackle previously unaddressed challenges. It may be that external evaluators, by posing 'stop and think' questions, motivate leaders to address low levels of progress and achievement or review aspects of their curriculum. It may be that the board of trustees initiates improvement efforts. But any teacher who is curious, open, and aware of what is happening for students in their school will find opportunities to initiate inquiry and evaluation.

Whatever the context, schools that engage in evaluation for improvement are motivated to make changes that will have a positive impact on the learning and wellbeing of all their students, and they are sustained by the belief that they – leaders and teachers – can do better.

Improvement actions taken

Improvement actions are actions that emerge out of evaluation processes.

When deciding how to respond to evaluation findings, an early consideration is whether the school has the internal capability to forge ahead with the necessary changes or whether it should seek to engage the support of external expertise, perhaps from another school or a provider of professional learning and development. Good decisions at this point rely heavily on leaders knowing what it takes to bring about significant educational change.

Capability building is often high on the list when it comes to improvement actions, to ensure that leaders and teachers have the skills and knowledge they need to make the desired changes. Another priority is often to improve how leaders and teachers work together because professional collaboration is such a crucial aspect of any school improvement endeavour that better outcomes for students will depend on it.

Shifts in practice

By monitoring the implementation of improvement actions and evaluating their impact, boards, leaders and teachers come to learn what works or does not work, for which learners, and why.

In the absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation, shifts in practice, and their impact, can go unnoticed. Even a small shift, in conjunction with other shifts, can increase forward momentum or contribute to the realisation of a big goal. The biggest shifts are those that penetrate to the core of teaching practice. Shifts in the conditions that support effective evaluation will contribute to shifts in teaching practice.

Monitoring allows for real-time adjustments to be made to improvement actions when they are seen to be not having the intended impact; it also allows for new knowledge to be harvested and used more widely for improvement purposes.

Examples of shifts in practice

Table 1 provides examples of the kinds of shifts in practice that boards of trustees, leaders and teachers have made with the express purpose of improving outcomes for their learners. They are from ERO's case studies of schools that have effective internal evaluation processes. The examples are grouped under the six organisational influences on student outcomes (domains) identified in *School Evaluation Indicators – Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success*.

You could use the examples in the table as a starting point for discussion about shifts that you are currently making or to inform your thinking about actions you need to consider for a particular evaluation context.

TABLE 1. Examples of shifts in practice that schools have made to improve outcomes for learners

Stewardship	
FROM	TO
Tabling reports on curriculum review and student wellbeing and achievement	Scrutinising and interrogating reports to understand their implications for decision making
Setting broad targets as a paper exercise	Involving teachers in setting appropriate targets for specific cohorts of students
Focusing on policies and planning	Focusing on how well the board is enacting its stewardship roles and responsibilities
Focusing narrowly on what is happening for students while at school	Situating students on a pathway of lifelong learning
Leadership	
FROM	TO
Task and budget-focused leaders	Lead learners and leaders of learning
Senior leaders monitoring classroom practice	Senior leaders mentoring teachers – engaging in challenging conversations and providing structure to support teacher reflection
Leaders having little knowledge of recent educational research	Leaders keeping up to date with educational research and using it to help prioritise actions within the school
Expectations of teachers and students not clearly articulated or consistently implemented	Leaders setting clear expectations of teachers and students
Educationally powerful connections and relationships	
FROM	TO
Relying on public meetings for parents and whānau	Personalised communication to parents and whānau, seeking feedback on the school’s performance and direction
Accepting that parents and whānau seldom come to school events and interviews	Making engagement with parents and whānau an ongoing priority
Offering limited opportunities for parents and whānau to find out about their children’s learning	Providing opportunities for parents and whānau to communicate regularly about their children’s learning
15% attendance by parents and whānau at interviews	85% attendance after introducing a whānau tutor system and giving parents and whānau a 20-minute interview with one teacher

Responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn

FROM	TO
Teacher-directed learning	Deliberate acts of teaching in linguistically and cognitively rich classrooms
Students not being aware of their achievement levels or next steps	Students knowing where they are at in their learning and what their next steps are
Teaching writing	Teaching writers
A focus on behaviour management – ‘putting out fires’	A focus on effective teaching strategies and providing opportunities for all students to learn
Deficit thinking and blaming students for poor outcomes	Teachers recognising the need to improve their teaching

Professional capability and collective capacity

FROM	TO
Reliance on external support to build capability	Building self-sustaining internal capability
Staff meetings focused on administrative and organisational matters	Well-structured professional learning conversations
Appraisal processes in which teachers ‘cherry pick’ their goals	Teacher goals linked to improvement actions and student learning

Evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building and innovation

FROM	TO
Data analysis happening at the leadership level for reporting to the board	Teachers actively engaged in analysing their data and using it in their planning and teaching
Informal approaches to evaluation	Systematic and manageable evaluation aligned to school priorities
Evaluation happening as isolated activities	A coherent and connected approach to school evaluation
‘We reckon’	‘We know’ – and have the evidence of improvement.

To think about and discuss

- > Which of these shifts in practice resonate with us?
- > What impact might these shifts have for students?
- > What actions might these schools have taken to make these shifts in practice?
- > What can we learn from these examples?

Outcomes for learners

Effective internal evaluation processes enable trustees, leaders, teachers, parents, families, whānau and the wider school community to better understand:

- > how individual learners and groups of learners are performing in relation to valued outcomes
- > how improvement actions taken have impacted on learner outcomes and what difference is being made
- > what needs to be changed and what further action needs to be taken
- > the patterns and trends in outcomes over time
- > what kinds of practices are likely to make the most difference for diverse learners and in what contexts
- > the extent to which the improvements achieved are good enough in terms of the school's vision, values, strategic direction, goals and priorities for equity and excellence.

School improvement journeys: two examples

The following examples outline how two of the case study schools engaged in internal evaluation with an improvement agenda. In the first example, a school set out on a two-year journey to raise achievement in a particular area of the curriculum. In the second example, a school embarked on a much longer improvement journey that had a number of different but related foci.

An improvement journey with a curriculum focus

This first example is of an 'emergent' evaluation (see page 13) triggered when their analysis of data at the mid-year checkpoint in 2012 revealed poor achievement in writing. Key points are described in the diagram on pages 30-31. Note the context for this evaluation, the links between the evaluation processes and reasoning, and the actions taken and shifts in practice made. By comparing the data for 2012 and 2014, the school was able to measure the progress of different cohorts of learners.

To think about and discuss

- > What were some of the organisational conditions that enabled this evaluation?
- > What evaluation capabilities did the leaders and teachers have going into this evaluation?
What capabilities might they have developed by engaging in this evaluation?
- > What relationship can you see between the improvement actions and the shifts in practice?
- > What might have been some of the 'reasoning' that contributed to this evaluation process?

An improvement journey with a curriculum focus

Context for improvement

- > the most recent ERO review (2010) had focused on self review
- > The senior leadership team had increased capabilities in the areas of self review, pedagogical strategies, inquiry/reflection and coaching
- > Student achievement data revealed issues in writing
- > The quality of planning varied greatly from teacher to teacher
- > Achievement targets needed to be realigned following the introduction of National Standards.

NOTICING

Analysis of data in mid-2012 revealed that despite recent professional development achievement in writing was poor. Senior leaders decided to take a closer look at what was happening.



INVESTIGATING

Phase 1. Visits to classrooms, looking at teacher planning and students' writing, and talking with students convinced leaders that an in-depth, school-wide evaluation of the teaching of writing was needed. "What we were doing was not getting the results."

Phase 2. Leaders read up on what the research evidence had to say about teaching writing. They listened to the teachers' theories about teaching writing. They collected samples of student writing from across the school and from the contributing intermediate school.

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS

- > Deliberate use of senior leadership team capabilities
- > Collaborative development of the writing progressions led to teachers taking more responsibility for analysing their own classroom data
- > Workloads and change processes kept manageable
- > Videoing of lessons introduced as a tool to support teachers to reflect on their practice
- > Professional discussions about assessment practices, making teacher judgements, and building a shared understanding of student progress and achievement
- > Students are given access to the writing progressions to support their learning.



PRIORITISING TO TAKE ACTION

The leadership team decided that the priority was to increase teacher pedagogical knowledge. They knew that this would involve challenging existing practice through discussion, coaching and guided critical reflection. Expectations for change were clear, and external expertise was engaged to facilitate the process.

SHIFTS IN PRACTICE

From	To
Teaching writing	Teaching writers
Limited use of data	Using data to inform teaching
A focus on managing behaviour	A focus on effective teaching
Blaming external factors	Recognising the need to improve



COLLABORATIVE SENSE MAKING

The leadership team's analysis of the information they had gathered revealed low levels of teacher pedagogical knowledge, hugely variable teaching practice, and that some teachers attributed poor achievement to factors outside of the school.

OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

A comparison of the numbers of students (2012 and 2014) at or above National Standards for writing reveals these percentage shifts:

Whole-school: Up 7% to 52% (131 students)

Students in years 4, 5 and 6: Year 4 up 15% to 56% (24 students); year 5 up 13% to 46% (19 students); year 6 up 27% to 62% (30 students)

Māori students in years 4, 5 and 6: Year 4 up 16% to 52% (19 students); year 5 up 20% to 47% (13 students); year 6 up 27% to 62% (30 students)

Pacific students in years 4, 5 and 6: Year 4 up 25% to 75% (3 students); year 5 up 10% to 43% (3 students); year 6 up 39% to 69% (9 students).



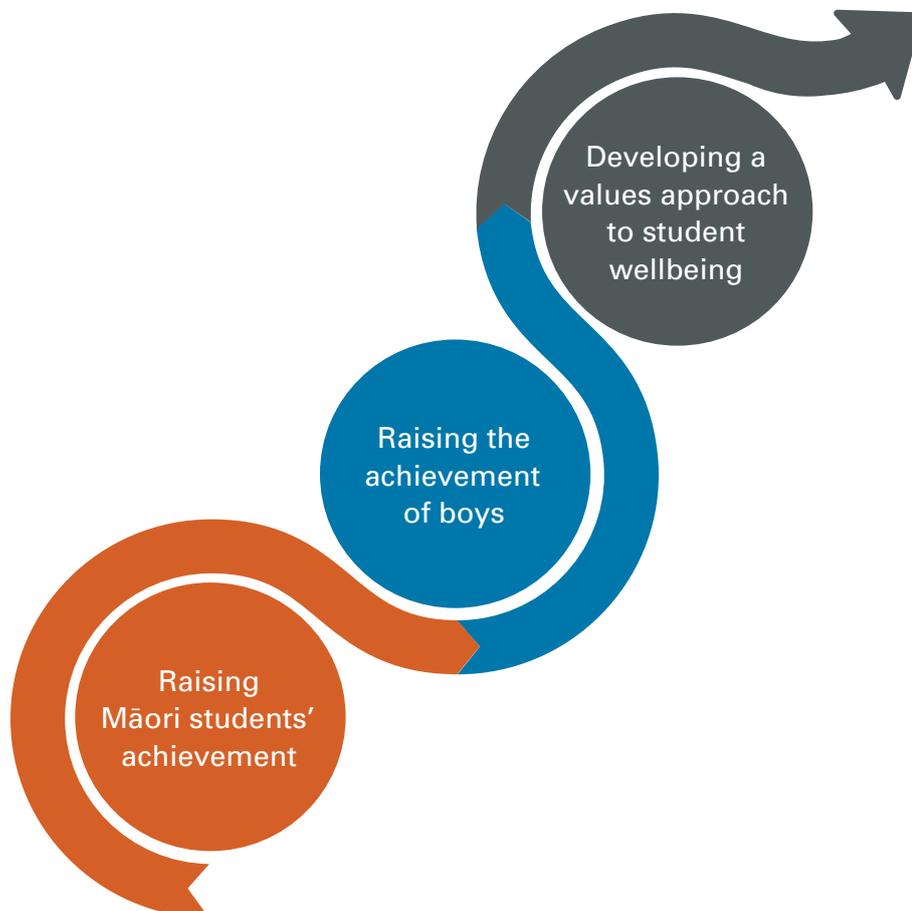
A longer-term improvement journey

This example is of a longer-term improvement journey (2006–14). This school began with an investigation into the achievement of Māori students, followed by an investigation into the achievement of boys, and then a third investigation into student engagement and wellbeing. Although the three evaluations each had a different focus they were obviously connected. As the board of trustees, leaders and teachers inquired into their practice, their individual capabilities and collective capacity to engage in internal evaluation developed over time.

The diagrams on the next three pages show how, for each of the three inquiries, the school went through the five evaluation processes described on pages 15-20.

To think about and discuss

- > What were some of the organisational conditions that enabled these evaluations?
- > What evaluation capabilities did the school have going into these evaluations?
What capabilities might they have developed by engaging in this evaluation?
- > What was the motivation for improvement in these examples?
- > How are the three evaluations connected? What do they have in common?
What is different in each?





Raising the achievement of Māori students

Overview of evaluation and reasoning processes

Noticing

NCEA results (levels 1 and 2) masked the disparity between Māori and Pākehā students.

None of the initiatives implemented by the school had changed outcomes for Māori students.

Investigating

All the available data was closely re-examined.

Using the Effective Teacher Profile as a guide, all year 9 and 10 teachers were observed in the classroom; observations were followed by feedback sessions.

Collaborative sense making

Co-construction meetings were held once a term with all teachers of year 9 and 10 students.

Prioritising to take action

A commitment was made to sustaining the principles of Te Kotāhitanga.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Ongoing gathering, analysis and use of data at all levels of the school.

Improvement actions

“If we were going to keep doing for our Māori students what we had always done, we were going to get what we’d always got – and it was way not good enough.”

Ongoing classroom observations, feedback sessions, co-construction meetings and regular professional development for teachers.

Modelling discursive teaching strategies: “If you are using discursive teaching strategies and co-constructing or power sharing the kids are going to enjoy learning, learn, and have fun.”

“We are going to keep working to achieve the target of raising our Māori student achievement to mirror the achievement of our non-Māori students. We are going to keep going until there is no gap.”

Shifts in practice

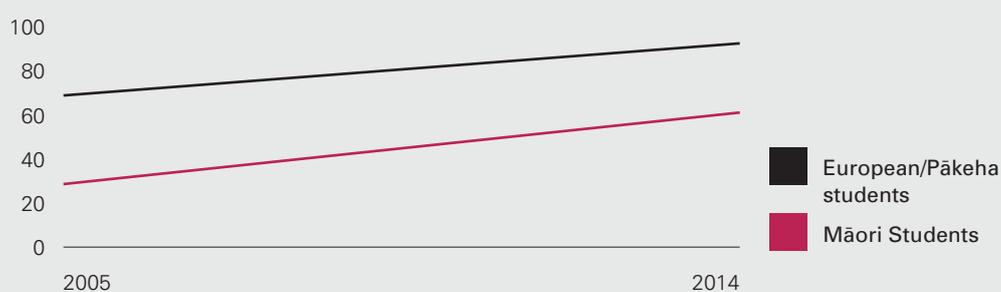
From	To
Having the 'will' to make a difference for Māori students	Finding the 'way' to make a difference for Māori students
Traditional approaches to teaching	Discursive, relational approaches to teaching and learning
Accepting that whānau are seldom seen at school events and interviews	Whānau engagement is an ongoing focus for improvement

2005 – Major disparity between Māori and Pākeha NCEA results

Processes and improvement actions

- Trial school for Te Kotāhitanga
- Discursive teaching practices
- Focus on relationships
- Classroom observations of all year 9 and 10 teachers
- Co-construction meetings every term

Students gaining NCEA level 2



2014 – The disparity between Māori and Pākeha gaining NCEA level 2 is reducing



Raising the achievement of boys

Overview of evaluation and reasoning processes

Noticing

At the 2005 prize giving, the new board chair, noticing that the procession of students coming up for awards consisted mostly of girls, wrote 'boys' on a piece of paper and passed it to the principal.

Investigating

Randomly selected boys from across the school's seven year levels were involved in focus groups to find out what worked well for them in terms of supporting their learning and achievement, and what didn't.

Collaborative sense making

Data from the focus groups was analysed and narratives written. These narratives, together with data relating to boys' achievement and boys' discipline, were analysed and shared with staff. A key theme in the narratives was 'boys just want to have fun, too!'

Prioritising to take action

It was decided to make boys' achievement a school-wide focus.

"What is good for Māori is good for all, especially boys."

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Ongoing scrutiny of data through a 'what is happening for boys?' lens was put in place. Coupled with the ongoing implementation of Te Kotāhitanga, this initiative has contributed to significant shifts in boys' achievement.

Improvement actions

A professional learning group was established. The teachers in this group committed to using a teaching-as-inquiry approach with four or five boys in their classroom, trying different strategies and reflecting on what worked and what didn't. They met regularly to share their reflections with others in the group.

An external facilitator worked with the staff on 'schema', which was about understanding the different ways in which girls and boys engaged and behaved. This 'opened the door for staff to admire boys' behaviour'.

Shifts in practice

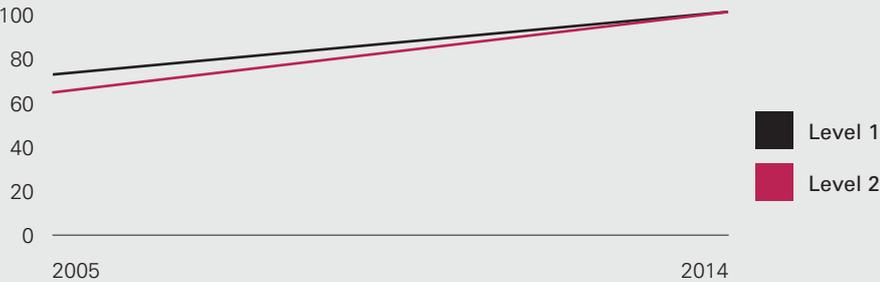
From	To
Traditional pedagogical practices	A pedagogy focused on positive relationships and discursive teaching practices ('rainbow effect' – Te Kotāhitanga)

2005 – Boys' achievement is behind that of girls

Processes and improvement actions

- Professional learning group established to use teaching-as-inquiry methodology
- Focus groups set up by English department
- Focus groups with boys at each year level
- Boys' narratives and data collected

Boys gaining NCEA levels 1 and 2



2014 – The percentages of boys gaining NCEA levels 1 and 2 have increased significantly



Developing a values approach to student wellbeing

In 2011 the school's approach to behaviour management consisted of a set of expected behaviours (rules), consequences for breaching the rules, and disciplinary steps.

Evaluation and reasoning processes

Noticing

Leaders found the data on stand downs, suspensions and referrals to the deans' centre to be unacceptable.

Investigating

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) facilitators gathered data to find out how well the school's behaviour management approach was known by staff and students.

Collaborative sense making

Analysis of data showed that staff could name only three or four of the expected behaviours and that these behaviours were not well known by the students.

Prioritising to take action

The ongoing priority is to create a climate where student behaviour is appropriate for the context, and focused on learning.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Regular gathering and analysis of data about stand downs, suspensions and referrals to the student centre enables the school to monitor and evaluate the impact of actions taken.

Improvement actions

The school embarked on an 18-month process of consultation to identify an agreed set of school values. The views of staff, students, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), board of trustees and wider community were sought. This was a slow and deliberate process, 'sowing seeds' – it wasn't a revolution. Leaders recognised the importance of ownership. The outcome of this process was WAKA.

Improvement actions included changing the name of the deans' centre to 'student centre'; using a 'stop the bus' mechanism, every teacher taught the same WAKA lessons on how to recognise good behaviour; and the school's reward system was redeveloped with the introduction of WAKA cards to acknowledge WAKA behaviour.

W	We are learners – Whaia te mātauranga
A	Act with respect – Manaaki te tangata
K	Keep ourselves safe – Tiaki tangata
A	Always proud – Kia manawanui

"Every developmental step was collaborative and reflective – a slow but effective progress owned collectively by leaders, staff and students."

Shifts in practice

From	To
A discipline system based on poorly understood rules and consequences	A values-based approach 'lived' in every area of school life

2011 – Student wellbeing, stand down and exclusion data unsatisfactory

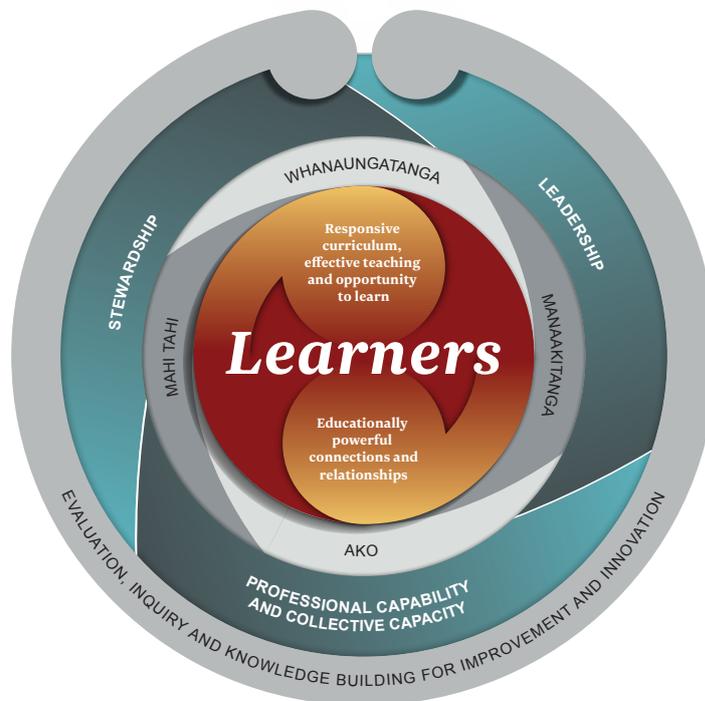
Processes and improvement actions

- Involvement in PB4L
- Data gathered about how well rules and consequences were understood by staff and students
- Deliberative development of values

2014 – The numbers of stand downs and suspensions have fallen progressively over the last 4 years

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Stand downs	111	75	67	47
Suspensions	42	25	22	15

4. Using the school evaluation indicators to support continuous improvement



The school evaluation indicators identify practices that contribute to effective evaluation. These practices should be viewed holistically, not used in isolation or as a checklist. Use them as a 'sieve' or trustworthy reference when trying to make sense of data and to answer the question, *How good is our practice?* Use them too when investigating the relationship between different – and, sometimes, apparently unconnected – aspects of your school's performance.

Table 2 provides a broad framework for thinking about how you might use the indicators in your own school. Possible uses are suggested in relation to each of the five evaluation processes identified and discussed in this guide.

The indicators can be used in different ways during different phases of internal evaluation.

For example:

- > Use the **outcome indicators** as the starting point for evaluating the educational opportunities that your school offers its students and investigating who is/is not achieving, and identifying those students whose progress needs to be accelerated
- > Use the six **domains of influence** as a framework for identifying where you might concentrate your inquiry and data gathering
- > Use the process indicators and associated **effective practice statements** as a framework when trying to make sense of your data and identify and prioritise improvement actions
- > When monitoring and evaluating the impact of your improvement actions, the **outcome indicators** can help you maintain focus on what is happening for all learners.

The indicators for Domain 6, **Evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building for improvement and innovation**, and the associated effective practice statements can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of your school's approach to evaluation.

TABLE 2. USING THE SCHOOL EVALUATION INDICATORS

Process	Possible use of the indicators	Evaluation reasoning: questions we might ask
Noticing	Outcome indicators focus evaluation on the learner. They can assist in mapping the context and identifying what matters most in terms of student outcomes	What does our information tell us about the extent to which all learners are achieving high-level curriculum outcomes: confidence in identity, language and culture; wellbeing; achievement and progress; and participation and contribution? Which learners are/are not achieving, and in what contexts?
Investigating	Domains/process indicators can assist in focusing inquiry and data gathering	Considering the six domains of influence, where do we need to focus our evaluation? What do we know and how? What further information do we need? How might we find out? What questions do we need to answer/focus on?
Collaborative sense making	Domains/process indicators and the associated effective practice statements can assist with sense making and identifying areas for an improvement focus	What is our evidence telling us? Do we know enough about the effectiveness of our practice to determine what we need to improve and where we need to go next? What else can we use/draw on that will assist us to plan next steps?
Prioritising to take action	Domains/process indicators can assist in determining priorities and taking action	What is the most important action we need to take and why? To take action, what kind of support do we need to draw on or put in place?
Monitoring and evaluating impact	Outcome indicators provide the starting point for monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions taken	How are we going? What is our data/information telling us? Do we need to modify or change what we are doing? What impact is our action having? Are we providing opportunities for all learners to learn, progress and achieve?

5. Integrating internal and external evaluation for improvement

School evaluation has both internal and external components, and the two should be seen as working together.

New Zealand has ... gone furthest among countries internationally towards a collaborative school evaluation model, incorporating at the same time a sequential process ... [the] approach is collaborative in the sense that both parties attempt to work together to agree on a rounded picture of the school in which there is mutual recognition of its strengths and consensus on areas for development.¹⁰

Schools set in place their own evaluation processes and, as part of an annual reporting cycle, provide regular accounts of student achievement in relation to goals and targets, along with planned improvement actions.

Then periodically ERO conducts an external evaluation. The school's student achievement information and associated internal evaluation forms the starting point for ERO's external evaluation and for engagement with other education agencies and professionals.

School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success expresses the intent of ERO's external evaluations in this way:

Participation in periodic external evaluation supports the school's cycle of continuous improvement through providing an external lens on the school's improvement journey: its performance in relation to excellence and equity of outcomes for every student, the extent to which school conditions support ongoing improvement; and next steps for development. (ERO, 2015, p6)

The indicators are designed to make it easier for internal and external evaluations to talk to each other:

The indicators provide a common language for the interaction and dialogue between a school and ERO about the development since the last review, the current state and future direction. (ERO, 2015, p6)

Domain 6 of the indicators framework, **Evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building for improvement and innovation** is the engine that drives improvement. The indicators in this domain highlight the relationship between organisational conditions and the capacity to do and use evaluation for improvement, and how these influence engagement with external evaluation.

In effective schools internal evaluation processes are systematic, coherent and connected at all levels of the school. This alignment ensures that leaders, teachers and boards of trustees are able to purposefully engage with external evaluation, using it as an opportunity to review, validate and support their own improvement actions.

¹⁰ Nusche, D., Laveault, D., MacBeath, J., & Santiago, P. (2012). *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand 2011*, OECD Publishing (p.105).

Getting the most out of external evaluation

In thinking about and preparing for your ERO external evaluation the questions below provide a useful framework for developing an account of your school's development since the last evaluation, where that development is currently at, and areas for future focus.

Outcomes for learners

What are the outcomes that are valued for all learners in this school community, as learners in Aotearoa New Zealand, and as global citizens?

How well are all our learners achieving in relation to those outcomes?

To what extent is every student in our school a successful "confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learner"?

How well are we identifying and accelerating the achievement of those learners at risk of not achieving equitable outcomes?

How do we know? What sources of evidence tell us about our performance and effectiveness?

School conditions supporting ongoing improvement in learner outcomes

Since our last ERO evaluation:

What areas of development have we focused on to improve learner outcomes?

How have we enabled the school community to participate in/contribute to the development focus?

What actions have we taken? How effective have those actions been in promoting the improvements needed?

What have been the successes and challenges? Which domains of school activity have been most significant in supporting our improvement journey (stewardship; leadership; responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn; educationally powerful connections and relationships; professional capability and collective capacity; evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building for improvement)

What has been the impact?

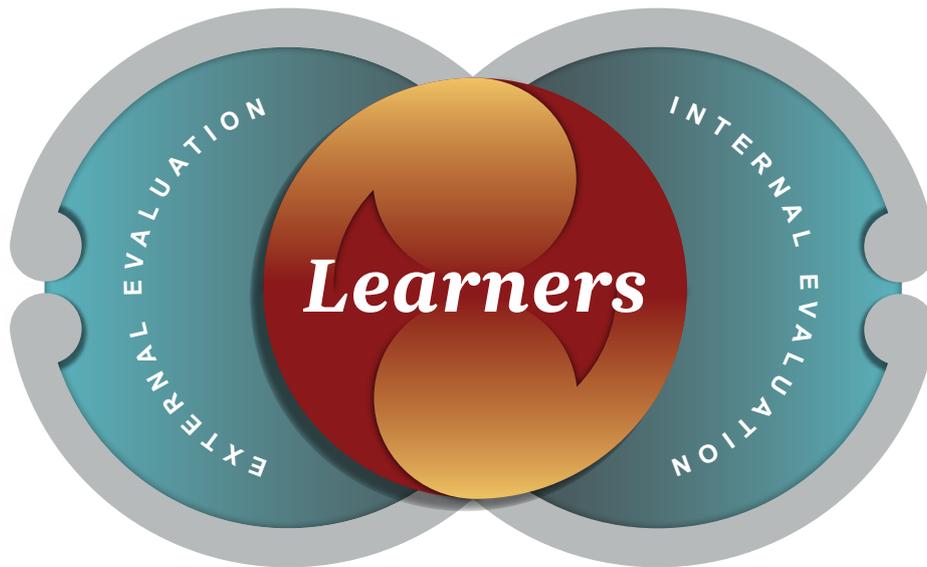
What are our continuing and/or next big areas for development and improvement?

This will provide an overview of your internal evaluation findings to present to ERO. ERO uses your school's learner outcome information and internal evaluation account to work with you to design the external evaluation for your school context.

During the evaluation process the ERO team will discuss the emerging evaluation findings with you and involve you in the interpretation of the evidence gathered to develop a shared understanding of the quality and effectiveness of education provision in your school and next steps.

The evaluation insights provided by ERO as an outcome of the external evaluation process should support every child to succeed as a lifelong learner.

School evaluation for equity and excellence



New Zealand Government