



Reporting to Parents:
National Standards Years 4 to 8 →

September 2012

Foreword

The Education Review Office (ERO) is an independent government department that reviews the performance of New Zealand's schools and early childhood services, and reports publicly on what it finds.

The whakataukī of ERO demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into early childhood services and schools, giving us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country. We collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies.

This report is part of a series ERO is publishing about National Standards. High quality reporting is an important aspect of the implementation of the National Standards. The report shows that while most of the schools evaluated were meeting their reporting requirements, there are still some that need to improve the way they communicate National Standards information to parents and whānau.

Successful delivery in education relies on many people and organisations across the community working together for the benefit of children and young people. We trust the information in ERO's evaluations will help them in their work.



Dr Graham Stoop
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Introduction

This ERO report is part of a series of reports being published over three years about aspects of the implementation of the National Standards in English-medium schools, with students in Years 1 to 8.¹ The report focuses on schools' progress with reporting to parents in relation to the National Standards.

The National Standards were introduced in 2010 as part of the Government's initiative to raise literacy and numeracy levels, and to lift student achievement. The standards describe what students in Years 1 to 8 should know and be able to do in reading, writing and mathematics at different points in their schooling. The standards were designed to evaluate progress towards the successful completion of National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2. Assessment and reporting against the standards is intended to provide information for schools, teachers, whānau and aiga so that they may better support students' learning. Schools are expected to take steps to increase the progress of those students achieving below the relevant National Standard.

High quality reporting to parents is a crucial aspect of the Government's implementation of the National Standards. This is reflected in the Ministry of Education's National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). The NAGs require schools to report to both parents and students about progress and achievement in relation to the National Standards.

From February 2010, schools have been required to report to parents in writing and in plain language, at least twice a year, about how their child is progressing and achieving in relation to the reading, writing and mathematics standards. The mid-year report is expected to focus on progress towards meeting the standards, with the end-of-year report to focus on the summary of individual student's progress and achievement in relation to the standards. For the reporting to be of benefit to students, it is essential that progress and achievement be communicated clearly and effectively to promote further learning.

ERO's 2011 report² indicated that the new reporting requirements had led many schools to review their reporting format, often in consultation with parents and students. The 2012 ERO report showed that 60 percent of schools had complied with the requirements to report against the National Standards twice in plain language during the 2010 school year.

During Term 4, 2011 and Term 1, 2012, ERO gathered data in relation to schools' reporting to parents. Two different questions were used during the period of this

¹ *Working with the National Standards within The New Zealand Curriculum* was published in August 2010. An interim report, *Working with the National Standards: Interim Findings Term 3, 2010* was published in November 2010. Two other reports have been published: *Working with the National Standards: Raising Student Achievement in Reading, Writing and Mathematics (March 2011)* and *Working with National Standards to Promote Students' Progress and Achievement (June 2012)*.

² Education Review Office, (2011). *Working with the National Standards: Raising Student Achievement in Reading, Writing and Mathematics*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

evaluation to take account of the reporting cycles of schools at the time of their ERO review. In Term 4, 2011 reviewers asked:

Have parents and whānau received at least one plain language written report in 2011 about their child's progress and achievement in relation to National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics?

For schools reviewed in Term 1, 2012 the question was:

Have parents and whānau received two plain language written reports in 2011 about their child's progress and achievement against National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics?

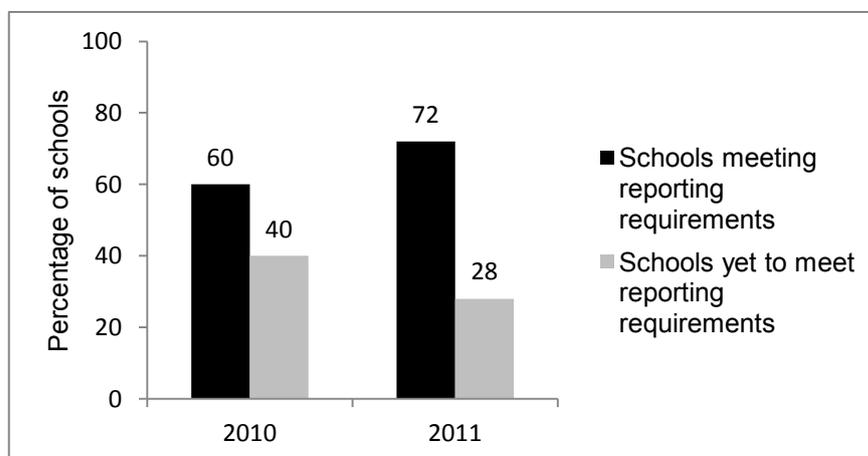
The difference between these two questions was considered during data analysis to ensure that schools reviewed in Term 4, 2011 were considered to be meeting the reporting requirements if they only reported once. This is reflected in the findings.

All data was collected by ERO review officers in the normal course of their review activities. ERO's *Framework for School Reviews* sets out the process for education reviews.³

Findings

ERO found that the percentage of schools meeting their reporting requirements increased during the 2011 school year. Seventy-two percent of the schools ERO investigated had met the reporting requirements as set out in the NAGs, while 28 percent were yet to meet the requirements. Figure 1 below shows the findings from the 2010 and 2011 school years.

Figure 1: Comparison of schools meeting reporting requirements in 2010 and 2011



³ See: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Schools-and-Kura-Kaupapa-Maori>

Elements of good practice

Where schools were particularly effective in their reporting, ERO found close alignment and integration of reporting with parent/teacher interviews. These interviews included students, teachers and parents/whānau/aiga, and supported the clear and effective communication of next steps for learning as set out in the reports. In the best examples, schools were very responsive to parental concerns over the clarity of messages in the report. They showed a commitment to consultation with parents, whānau and aiga so that they could report in a way which was meaningful for their audience.

Below is an example of a school that adopted a particularly innovative approach to reporting:

Full primary, rural, small, high decile

Written reporting is through a wiki-based digital learning portfolio. The password protected 'record keeping' page is able to be accessed by parents at any time and is also used as part of three-way conferences.

In 2011, 100% of parents attended the mid year student led conferences. Prior to this, parents were provided with opportunities to attend workshops to support their use of the digital portfolios. The National Standards information was printed off for one parent who was in the process of moving house at the time of the interviews. Parents spoken to during the review were very supportive of the achievement information available to them and felt fully aware of their children's performance relative to the National Standards.

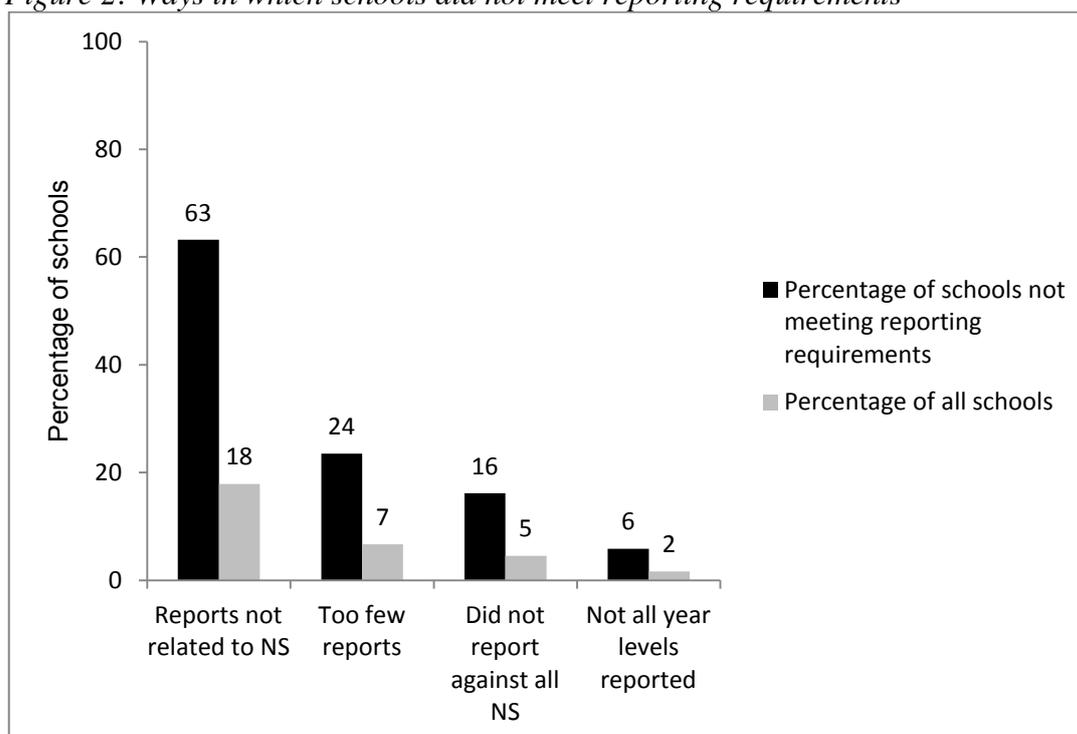
At the end of the year students write their own report that includes achievement relative to the National Standards. Varying levels of support to complete these is provided by teachers according to need. Each report also includes a detailed teacher comment on what the students wrote.

Schools not meeting their reporting requirements

When schools were not meeting reporting requirements, non-compliance took various forms, some of which overlapped. As Figure 2 shows, the most common form was reporting on student achievement without reference to the National Standards. Forty-three schools did not meet this requirement. These schools were often reporting in relation to curriculum levels, or indicators that were specific to the school. Of these 43 schools, ERO identified 14 that were working towards meeting their reporting requirements. The remaining 29 schools showed no evidence of plans to address this issue in the near future.

Some schools were not providing written reports often enough. Schools must report to parents, whānau and aiga in relation to the National Standards at least twice during the year. Sixteen schools failed to do so. Eleven schools were missing subject strands in their reporting with most reporting on numeracy but not other mathematics strands. In a small number of schools, students at some year levels received reports against the National Standards while other year levels did not.

Figure 2: Ways in which schools did not meet reporting requirements⁴



ERO found a variety of underlying reasons why schools did not meet the reporting requirements. Thirteen schools were experiencing leadership issues that prevented effective reporting. These included high staff turnover and miscommunication between leaders and teachers. In 11 schools, teachers required more development to confidently make overall teacher judgements in relation to the National Standards.

There were also 12 schools that had chosen not to meet requirements because they were opposed to the implementation of the National Standards. However, many of these schools had accepted their legal responsibilities by the time of the review, and were planning to meet requirements in the future. Only three schools continued to maintain their opposition. Other schools not meeting requirements were not necessarily opposed to the National Standards.

Six schools were dealing with two or more of the preceding issues.

Challenges for schools

Of the 172 schools that had met the reporting requirements, 32 still had some aspects to improve but these were not considered serious enough to be considered non-compliant. Most commonly, this was related to the requirement of plain language reporting. Twelve of these schools needed some further attention to make their reporting clearer for students, parents, whānau and aiga. Another minor issue was the lack of meaningful suggestions for what parents, whānau and aiga could do to

⁴ These numbers add to more than 100 percent because some schools had more than one area of non-compliance.

help with learning at home. This was the case for six schools who were otherwise meeting their reporting requirements.

Summary

The percentage of schools meeting their National Standards reporting requirements increased between 2010 and 2011, which is a positive development in the implementation of the National Standards. However, this is a legal requirement that all schools should now be meeting.

As an earlier Ministry of Education report affirms, ‘clear reporting to parents is a key element of the National Standards implementation.’⁵ It is essential that parents, whānau and aiga are adequately informed of how their child is achieving in relation to the National Standards so that they can best assist with ongoing learning and development.

Next steps

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education supports schools to:

- understand the value of sharing National Standards achievement information with parents, whānau and aiga
- share children’s National Standards achievement, progress and next steps in ways that are meaningful for parents, whānau and aiga.

ERO recommends that schools:

- review and respond to parents’ views of how well they understand their child’s achievement in relation to the National Standards.

⁵ Gill Thomas and Jenny Ward, *National Standards: School Sample Monitoring and Evaluation Project 2010* (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2011), 33.