



LEADING LOCAL CURRICULUM GUIDE

Assessment for learning

Using the right tools and resources to notice and respond to progress across the curriculum

Mā te whiritahi, ka whakatutuki ai
ngā pūmanawa ā tāngata.

Together, weaving the
realisation of potential.

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The primary purpose of
assessment is to improve
students' learning and
teachers' teaching as
both student and teacher
respond to the information
that it provides.

NZC, page 41





About this series

We want all our young people to have meaningful learning experiences. Such experiences energise everyone – students, teachers, parents and whānau, and community members. Through the Education Conversation, we have heard the request for greater support to develop and review local curriculum and learning that enriches the whole child.

The *Leading Local Curriculum Guide* series has been developed to steer review of your curriculum, assessment, and design decisions as you strengthen your local curriculum, respond to progress, and reinforce learning partnerships with parents and whānau. There are three guides:



- **Local curriculum**

Designing rich opportunities and coherent pathways for all learners



- **Assessment for learning**

Using the right tools and resources to notice and respond to progress across the curriculum



- **Information sharing and building learning partnerships**

Having conversations with young people and their families and whānau about their learning and progress

These guides are for curriculum leaders to help with your planning and school review. You can lead discussions with all your staff or within curriculum area or year groups – whichever works for your school.

We suggest you read the three guides and then decide which areas you'd like to focus on. You can complete the sections within each guide at your own pace.

About this guide >>

This guide focuses on informal assessment for learning in the classroom to inform teaching and learning, including selecting appropriate assessment tools for equitable and positive outcomes for all students. It will support you to review your assessment policies and procedures and can be used for ongoing review.



You can use this guide to lead conversations with your staff – to review your local assessment practices and decide which ones are working well and which can be improved.

It contains guidance, review questions, activities, examples, and resources to enable deep discussions within your school about assessment for learning. The start of the year is a good time to begin conversations with your staff that can continue throughout the year.

This guide also includes links to further information, including video clips and websites. To access the hyperlinks, click on the underlined links in the PDF.

Student and teacher use of assessment for learning

Teachers support learners to notice how they are going with their learning – where they are at, where to next, and whether they know how to get there. Learners use this personalised feedback to help them set goals and explore any misunderstandings. Teachers also notice any patterns in the class, such as common next steps or misconceptions, and adjust their teaching accordingly.

Teachers do this by observing learning processes and through conversations with learners. Occasionally, it is appropriate for teachers to use a high-impact assessment tool – one that is well-researched and reliable – to guide the next teaching and learning.

These practices are even more important now that our approaches to teaching and learning are so varied. Inquiry, project-based, cross-curricular, and play-based learning all require excellent curriculum and assessment knowledge and constant attention to student actions, so that teachers are able to “notice, recognise, and respond” to the needs of all the students in their care.

At the heart of good teaching and learning is the day-by-day, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute teaching and informal assessment practice in classrooms.



Think about these questions as you lead your review:

- How well does effective “of the moment” assessment for learning underpin teaching and learning in our school?
- Are we over-assessing?
- How well can we locate a student’s performance across the breadth of the curriculum and along a continuum of curriculum levels?
- How are student agency and assessment capability being grown across the school? Can all our students answer the following questions?
 - What are you learning?
 - Why are you learning it?
 - How well are you doing?
 - Where do you need to go next?
- How confident are we about the quality of teacher judgments across our school?



Read about how one school uses assessment for learning practices to help improve NCEA outcomes for students.

A year 11 teacher from Excellere College illustrates how using assessment for learning classroom practices helped improve NCEA outcomes for his students.

Further resources for guidance

- [*Trends in assessment: An overview of themes in the literature*](#) by Rosemary Hipkins and Marie Cameron. This report on assessment capability in the New Zealand education system outlines findings from a literature review of trends in assessment policy and practice. The authors use “assessment capability” as a point of reference.
- [*Assessment for learning in practice from Assessment Online*](#) outlines the key assessment capabilities for developing an assessment for learning dynamic in the classroom.



Activity >>

Supporting student agency and assessment capability

- **Work in small groups to list and describe your expectations of students in relation to (1) learner agency and (2) assessment capability.** Use these lists to make a Venn diagram for the two terms to illustrate and consolidate your shared understandings of them and their similarities and differences.
- **Now think of specific students you are teaching this year.** Use the diagram’s indicators and descriptions of being assessment-capable to identify students who are assessment-capable and those who are still getting there. For example, which students consistently know what they are learning, why, how they are going, and where to next?
- **Think, pair, share:** What can you do in your classroom to increase your students’ assessment capability? You may want to design a matching Venn diagram that shows teacher actions.
- **Look at what you’ve planned for next week** and identify how you could adjust it to better support your less assessment-capable students.





Using assessment information to inform teaching and learning

Remember who you are assessing for!

The primary owners of assessment information are your students.

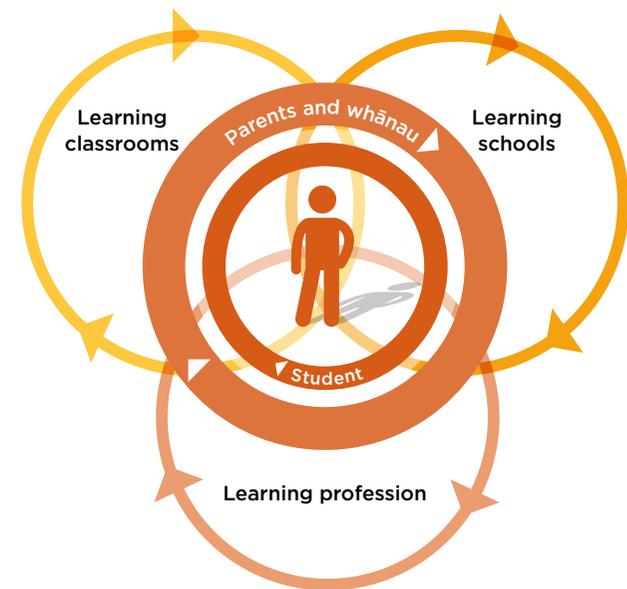
Teacher judgments about progress and achievement across the curriculum may be shared with anyone who has a stake in using the information.

This includes:

- students
- teachers
- parents and whānau
- school leaders
- boards of trustees
- the Ministry of Education.

Good formal teacher judgments are **valid** (based on what students have learned) and **reliable** (other teachers would make the same judgment with the same evidence). Teacher judgments should also provide information on what students have learned and their focus for what to learn next.

A system that learns



Adapted from Figure 2: Schooling System = a Learning System. [Ministry of Education Position Paper: Assessment \[Schooling Sector\]](#) (2011).

Assessment should inform teaching and learning. Give yourself permission to stop any practices that are not contributing to this.

Assessment as compliance	Assessment that informs teaching and learning
Progress and achievement are assessed only through the use of assessment tools. Progressions of learning are not well-documented or commonly shared across the teaching staff.	Sound teacher judgments are supported by reliable assessment tools, and ongoing classroom observations and conversations provide information on progress and achievement.
	Progressions of learning are well-documented and supported by exemplars from student work, teacher observations, and assessment tool information. Teachers and students have a shared understanding of progress across curriculum and year levels.
Teacher judgments are not moderated. There are no common understandings of “what good looks like”.	Effective moderation practices establish “what good looks like” at a range of levels. Student exemplars are used to illustrate different levels of achievement.
Several tools are used to assess progress and achievement within a year level and learning area.	There is a school-wide plan that reflects the purposeful use of a small number of tools to supplement teacher observations and learning conversations.
There are no standardised procedures across the school for assessment tools.	Every teacher knows how to administer assessment tools according to the instructions from tool developers. Teachers have time to discuss procedures.
Assessment is something that is “done” to the students, without their involvement. Students see it as a “test” and something to be worried about.	Students are involved in assessment processes and they see it as a learning opportunity. They’re motivated to do their best, and they look forward to finding out how they’re progressing with their learning. Students discuss with peers, whānau, and teachers where they’re at, what they want to improve on, and how others can help them.
Assessments are carried out at times only to provide information for school leaders or outside providers.	All assessments are carefully chosen to provide valuable information for stakeholders, particularly students and teachers, to act on.
Analysis of assessment information is done by a select few in the school, and results are presented to teachers.	Teachers are assessment- and analysis-capable and take an interest in working with class/cohort data to establish student pathways for learning.

Activity >>

Reviewing of school practices: Do all assessment practices inform teaching and learning?

- **Compare your assessment practices** with the list of effective practices in the right-hand column of the table.
- **Make a visual representation** by drawing up a five-point scale for each practice. Each teacher can place a dot as to where they think the school sits on the scale and explain why on a sticky note.
- **Discuss which practices need improvement.** Decide on an area to work on first. This could be the area that needs the most work or one that links with other initiatives within the school.



Assessment tools and teacher judgments

Results from assessment tools are used in conjunction with teacher observations and learning conversations with students to support teacher judgments.

As a school leader, you should expect to see a reasonably high correlation between teacher judgments and assessment results. Because of the nature of assessment processes, there will be differences - these should be investigated to make sure that the judgments are reliable.

It's important to note that there are not formal assessment tools for all learning areas and the key competencies. Teacher judgments in these areas will be supported by classroom observations, school-developed exemplars, and cross-level and cross-school understandings of progress.



Although schools are free to choose the tools and resources they use, there are high-impact, well-researched, reliable assessment tools that measure progress and achievement. They provide authentic tasks, linked to the New Zealand Curriculum and offering rich opportunities for next step learning. [Assessment guidelines at Assessment Online](#) will help you choose the most appropriate assessment tool.



New emphases from the NAGs:

Measuring progress and achievement across the curriculum

Analysis of good-quality assessment information

Table 1: High-impact, well-researched, reliable assessment tools

Each tool has a specific purpose that helps with decisions about **why** and **when** you would use it. There is also guidance about **how** each tool should be used.

◀ ◀ ◀ FREQUENCY OF USE ▶ ▶ ▶	
More frequent Purpose: noticing and diagnosing	Less frequent (likely once per year) Purpose: tracking and monitoring
Running records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A framework for systematically observing a student's reading processing system 	Numeracy assessment tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NumPA, GloSS, IKAN and JAM Four assessments cover years 1-10
	Assessment resource banks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English, mathematics, and science for curriculum levels 1-5
	An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (known as the six-year net) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A set of tasks on basic reading and writing concepts
	PATs (Progressive Achievement Tests) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mathematics and listening comp - years 3-10 Reading comp and vocab - years 4-10 Punctuation and grammar - years 4-10
	e-asTTle (Electronic Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading and mathematics - years 4-10 Writing - years 1-10
	Science assessment tools from NZCER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science: Thinking with Evidence - years 7-10 Junior science: Thinking with Evidence - years 4-6

Further information on these assessment tools is available at [Assessment Online](#).

The Learning Progression Frameworks (LPFs) and the Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT) are curriculum progress tools.

LPFs describe the significant learning signposts that students reach as they develop their skills in reading, writing, and maths in years 1 to 10. They provide a big-picture illustration of the typical pathways students take as they make progress in reading, writing, and maths.

PaCT is a tool designed to help teachers make dependable judgments about students' achievement and progress in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Teachers and schools can use PaCT to view students' progress in relation to the levels of the New Zealand Curriculum and to help them understand the effectiveness of their local curriculum.

Together, the tools provide valuable information to support teaching and learning conversations and guidance on next steps.

It is not expected that all these tools will be used for all students all the time.

Think about these questions as you lead your review:

- How sure are we that all the assessments we carry out in our school are being used to support teaching and learning?
- In what ways do we involve our students in the assessment process?
- Are we confident in our understanding of the progress and achievement of our students across the curriculum?
- How confident are we that we administer assessment tools accurately so the results are reliable? What are our checks on this?
- How sure are we that the moderation processes used in our school are effective?
- How confidently are our teachers able to analyse assessment data?

Read about how **Prospect School reviewed their assessment processes.**

The removal of National Standards gave Prospect School in West Auckland the opportunity to review their assessment processes. They kept what was working for them, discarded what was not, and are further developing their progressions of learning across the curriculum.

Further resources for guidance

- **Reviewing your school's assessment systems**
Assessment Online provides guidance on the process of reviewing your school's assessment systems.
- **Measuring progress across the curriculum**
A compilation of the curriculum teaching and assessment resources that are available to schools.
- **Monitoring key competencies**
Strategies for monitoring and documenting learners' development of the key competencies.



Activity >>

Doing a stocktake of assessment tools

- **Work in learning area or year level groups** to document the assessment tools that you use to measure progress and achievement.
- **Draw up a school-wide map** of the resources and tools you use to notice, recognise, and respond to progress across the curriculum and to support your teacher judgments.
- **Agree on what you mean** by high-impact assessment tools. Draft some criteria for them and rate the tools you use against the criteria.
- **Identify duplicate assessment tools** and those that you think should be reviewed or changed.
- **Think about the practices associated with assessment tools.** Are you over-assessing particular students? Are there better ways to monitor progress?
- **Highlight the learning areas where there are few or no assessment tools.** Discuss how you might notice and recognise progress and achievement in these areas. Allocate them to your curriculum leaders for further investigation.



We hope this guide has been helpful. Please make sure you read the rest of the series:



- **Local curriculum:** Designing rich opportunities and coherent pathways for all learners
- **Information sharing and building learning partnerships:** Having conversations with young people and their families and whānau about their learning and progress

Where can you get further support?

The **guide series** is part of a package that will support schools to develop and review local curriculum.

Visit **NZ Curriculum Online** or contact your local Ministry of Education office for support and information.

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