

Ensuring high expectations for all learners

The statements below, about high expectations for learners in New Zealand schools, are supported by educational research (including the research referred to in this Update). The guiding questions are prompts to help schools consider what each statement implies for their particular context.

Promoting high expectations for all	Guiding questions <i>He pātai</i>
Learners can have abilities in a wide range of domains (for example, creative thinking, the arts, sports, interpersonal skills, and spirituality).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we focus our high expectations on? • How do we work with our students and their families to identify the full range of their abilities?
It is important that schools acknowledge, and set high expectations for, abilities and talents that reflect New Zealand's bicultural foundations and growing cultural diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How highly do we value our learners' linguistic and cultural capital? • How can we identify and cater for students' talents and abilities in ways that are culturally responsive?
Schools need to know what outcomes their wider communities value and to establish expectations in relation to those values. Given the range of areas in which learners can excel, schools should also draw on community expertise to support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we work with individuals and groups in our wider school community to improve our understanding of the qualities, talents, and abilities valued by that community? • How can we make better use of community expertise to support learning?
<p>It is essential that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expectations for each student are appropriate • teachers provide the scaffolding learners need in order to progress • the impact of teaching practice on student learning is monitored in an ongoing way • teachers take action to change their practice if it is not having the desired effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are our expectations for our learners reflected in their achievement? • How do we track their progress over time? • How do we monitor how well our teaching practice supports our students to progress at the rate they need to succeed? • What do we do when we notice that students are progressing more slowly or quickly than anticipated?
There is a range of assessment tools for measuring and monitoring student progress in academic areas, such as literacy and mathematics. Schools need to consider how to measure and monitor progress in other areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we monitor and respond to learners' progress in relation to outcomes such as the values and key competencies in <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>?
School leaders are responsible for ensuring that high expectations are communicated across the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What messages do our school leaders communicate about their expectations of students? • How are these messages received?
Some learners' abilities are masked by special education needs, language factors, or behavioural issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we identify our learners' potential level of success (as opposed to their current level)?
High expectations help to motivate learning when students and teachers understand and share them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do our students understand and share the expectations we have for them? • What outcomes do they themselves value? • What are their current expectations of themselves?
Students with high needs may progress at a different rate from their peers but have the same right to be challenged and to experience success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do we collaborate with the families of learners with high needs in order to establish and work towards worthwhile and challenging outcomes? • How do we celebrate these learners' successes?
New technologies have the potential to support high expectations by widening learning contexts and providing a forum for recording, reflecting on, and celebrating student progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could we use digital technologies such as e-portfolios to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – foster learners' expectations of themselves? – engage in two-way communication with parents about these expectations? – empower students to identify and manage their goals and to progress towards them? • How could we use digital technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – track student progress? – engage with educators elsewhere to develop our understanding of the high expectations principle?