



The NZ Curriculum - A Curriculum for All Students

FROM THE ONLINE RESOURCE *INCLUSIVE PRACTICE AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM*

*Hutia te rito o te harakeke,
Kei whea te kōmako e kō?
Kī mai ki ahau,
He aha te mea nui o te ao?
Māku e kī atu,
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata!*

*If the heart of harakeke is pulled out,
Where will the bellbird sing?
If I was asked,
What is the most important thing in the world?
I would be compelled to reply,
It is people, it is people, it is people!*

“ *The New Zealand Curriculum is a clear statement of what we deem important in education. It takes as its starting point a vision of our young people as lifelong learners who are confident and creative, connected, and actively involved.* ”

The New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, page 4

The New Zealand Curriculum is a statement of official policy for teaching and learning in English-medium New Zealand schools. It aligns with the expectations of *Te Whāriki* and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework to support our young people to grow as confident, connected, and actively involved lifelong learners. A parallel document, *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, serves the same function for Māori-medium schools and classrooms.

The New Zealand Curriculum is for all students. It does not discriminate; rather it requires that all students' identities, languages, cultures, abilities, and talents are recognised. In any class, diverse learners will be learning at, above, or below the expectations for their year level. The classroom curriculum must therefore be responsive to the learning needs of all of these students.

Effective teachers reflect on and plan how to address all their students' learning needs. They use inquiry, professional learning communities, and PLD; they draw on what is known about effective pedagogy; and they use school systems and processes, which can support them to confidently and capably teach all their students.



flexible framework

“ The New Zealand Curriculum, together with the Qualifications Framework, gives schools the flexibility to design and deliver programmes that will engage all students and offer them appropriate learning pathways. ”

The New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, page 41

The New Zealand Curriculum supports schools to ensure that teaching and learning are effective and engaging for all. When teaching, learning, and assessment recognise and respond to the unique differences of individuals, all students can learn.

The New Zealand Curriculum is not prescriptive. Its learning areas provide a flexible foundation for exploring, evaluating, integrating, and enhancing knowledge. Its key competencies, which capture learning capabilities and dispositions, strengthen the learning areas by supporting students to value curiosity, thinking, self-management, perseverance, collaboration, and caring for others.

The flexibility of the New Zealand Curriculum supports schools in meeting their responsibility to develop their own curriculum in response to the needs of all their learners and their community. The goals of students and whānau² are valued in the process. This means that each school's curriculum can reflect the needs of all the people in its community while still working within national policy guidelines. When schools work in this way, their practices become inclusive of all students.



As a group, discuss how your school-based curriculum reflects the inclusion principle on page 9 of *The New Zealand Curriculum*:

The curriculum is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory; it ensures that students' identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed.

Planning, teaching, and learning within the New Zealand Curriculum

Planning, teaching, and learning in an inclusive way enables all students to access the learning areas, values, key competencies, and principles of the New Zealand Curriculum. It is important to recognise that **level 1 is the starting point for all students** in the New Zealand Curriculum; there is no 'below' or 'pre' level 1. Therefore, alternative curricula are not required for particular groups of students.

Inclusive schools position every student as an active, capable learner. The following table identifies some of the shifts in practice that this requires.

² Note that throughout *Inclusive Practice and the School Curriculum*, 'whānau' is used in place of the full expression 'parents, families, and whānau'.

| Moving from ... | Towards ... |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Separate curricula for different student groups | All English-medium students working within the New Zealand Curriculum |
| Planning for some students | Planning for all students, drawing on whānau knowledge and, when required, specialist support |
| Academic achievement as the only measure of successful learning | Valuing diverse learning outcomes through rich assessment |
| Teaching and learning in isolation | Collaborative teaching and learning |
| Teacher-directed learning | Learning partnerships between teacher and students |
| Learning in one setting only | Recognising learning, progress, and achievement across settings |
| Students required to adapt to the school curriculum | The school curriculum able to be adapted to meet individual learning needs |
| Teaching that does not reflect the diversity of the school community (i.e., one size fits all) | Differentiation and adaptation of the classroom curriculum and school environment being embedded in the school culture |

Some teachers may find inclusive planning, teaching, and learning a challenging and complex process. However, many teachers and leaders are already finding ways to plan and implement the curriculum for all their students, drawing on specialist support when necessary. They work together to seek solutions to suit their students, classes, and school. For example, in March 2015 ERO reported that:

“ Most schools had good systems and practices to support students with special education needs ... Teachers and SENCOs carefully identified and responded to students' needs. Schools involved students with special education needs alongside their peers and placed them with staff who matched their needs and strengths. Effective practices included responding to individual needs with specific support, differentiating the curriculum, modifying activities and providing guidance for teacher's aides. Schools involved parents, teachers, specialist teachers and specialists in developing individual education plans (IEPs) with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound ... goals. They regularly reviewed progress towards these goals. ”

ERO, 2015, page 4



In pairs, select 2-3 rows of the above table. Discuss each row using an example of inclusive practice that you are familiar with.

Achieving a rich and balanced classroom curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum depicts typical progress in relation to eight levels. However, it acknowledges that students progress at different rates in different learning areas, depending on their individual strengths and learning needs.

Some students will learn and progress within one curriculum level for an extended period of time – sometimes the majority of their schooling. Others may not be working at the same level as most of their peers but over time progress through several curriculum levels. An individual student may be working at different curriculum levels across different learning areas. Regardless of the level, all learning must be valued and all progress and achievement recognised.

For students with special education needs, it is often helpful to follow an integrated approach to curriculum design.

“ While the learning areas are presented as distinct, this should not limit the ways in which schools structure the learning experiences offered to students. All learning should make use of the natural connections that exist between learning areas and that link learning areas to the values and key competencies. ”

The New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, page 16

The key competencies underpin everything that happens in teaching and learning, but they “are not separate or stand-alone. They are the key to learning in every learning area.” (*The New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, page 12*) For students with additional support needs, especially those working within level 1 of the curriculum, there can be a danger that schools plan for their learning only in relation to the key competencies. The key competencies should not be taught or assessed in isolation but should be an integral part of curriculum design within the learning areas.

“ Key competencies are fundamental drivers of change. If key competencies are seen as a recipe, they can be seen as ends in themselves, as ends to other ends - this creates limits to, and of, understanding. Think about really integrating the key competencies in the learning areas - what does this mean for practice? How do we enact the key competencies to support change? ”

Educational researcher, project interview, 2013

As a group, discuss how the following shift in practice is evidenced in your school.

[Inclusive pedagogy] represents a shift in thinking about teaching and learning from that which works for most learners along with something ‘different’ or additional’ for those who experience difficulties, to an approach to teaching and learning that involves the creation of a rich learning environment characterised by lessons and learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available to everyone so that all are able to participate in classroom life.

Florian and Linklater, 2010, page 370

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Further information on the principle of Inclusion in the New Zealand Curriculum is available on TKI. <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Principles/Inclusion/About>

