

LEADING LOCAL CURRICULUM GUIDE

# Local curriculum

Designing rich opportunities and coherent pathways for all learners



Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere. Ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te ao.

The bird that partakes of the miro berry owns the forest. The bird that partakes of education owns the world.

The nautilus logo on page 3 is by Penelope Newman.  
The diagram on page 4 is based on the overview diagram from *The New Zealand Curriculum*, page 7.

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## 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 or year level 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 the key elements of designing and reviewing your local curriculum. It can also be used for ongoing review.**

You can use it to lead conversations with:

- your staff, parents, whānau, hapū, iwi, and the wider community – to better understand the needs and interests of your students
- your staff – to talk about your school's areas of strength and what can be improved.

It contains guidance, review questions, activities, examples, and resources that will help to enable good decision making as you design and review your local curriculum. 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.**



We want to work with our school community to get some shared understandings about the teaching and learning we would like at our school.



We want a local curriculum that strengthens our people and celebrates our place.

How do we make our vision come alive for every learner, every day?



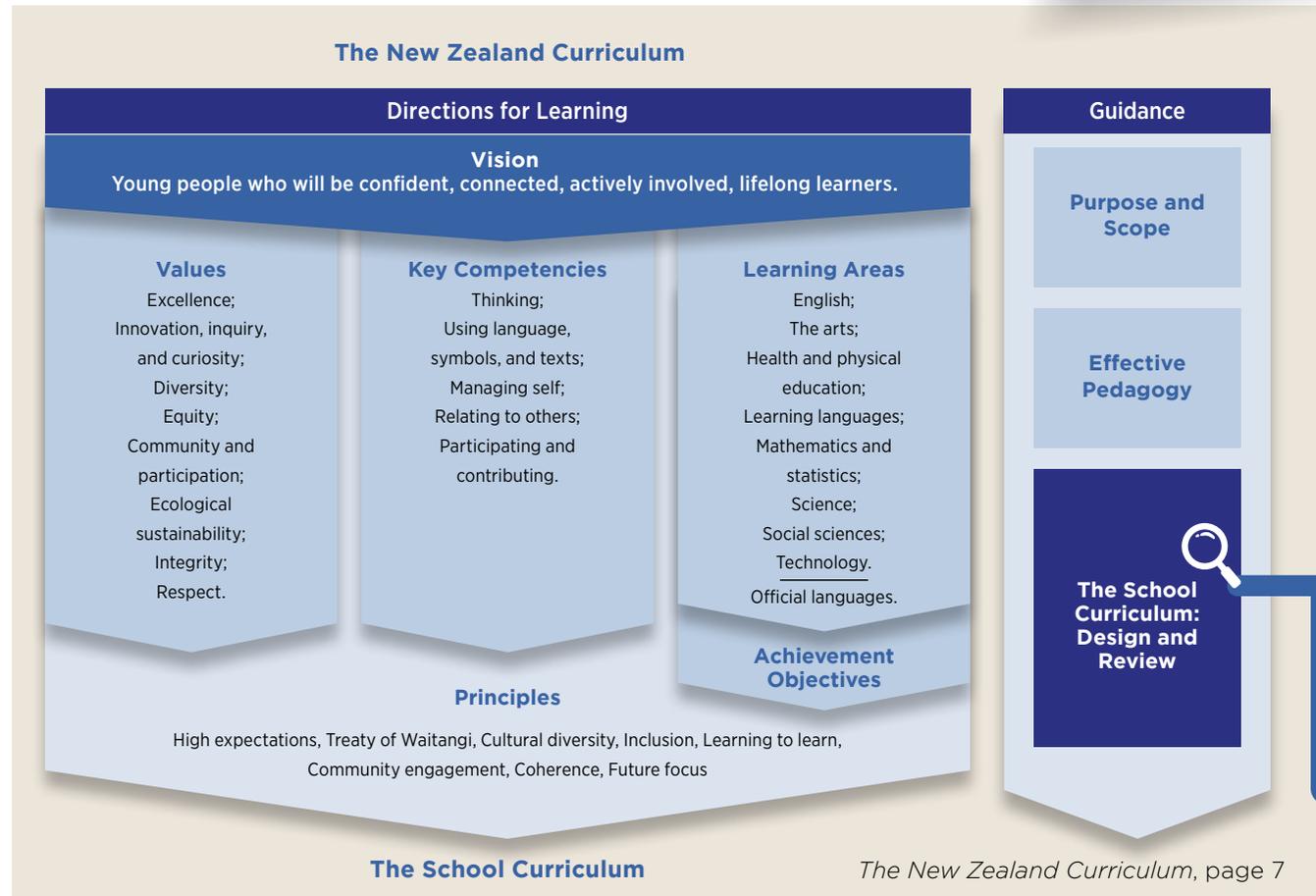
We know there are amazing people doing amazing things in our community. How do we better connect our students to these learning opportunities?

# What is a local curriculum?

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, creative, connected, and actively involved, and includes a clear set of principles on which to base curriculum decision making.

I see the (national) curriculum as the bones and what schools have to do is put the meat (the muscles) around them and then get the heart pumping.

**Principal**



NB: The New Zealand Curriculum uses the term "school curriculum" instead of "local curriculum".

Your local curriculum is the way you bring the New Zealand Curriculum to life in your school. It should:

- be responsive to the needs, identities, languages, cultures, interests, strengths, and aspirations of your learners and their families
- have a clear focus on what supports the progress of all learners
- help students understand Te Tiriti o Waitangi – its past, present, and future (you will also be planning learning that helps students live the Treaty as citizens of Aotearoa)
- help learners engage with the knowledge, values, and key competencies, so they can go on to be confident and connected lifelong learners.

## Key points for designing and reviewing your local curriculum

### It's your school and it's your curriculum

Your local curriculum should be unique and responsive to the priorities, preferences, and issues of your community and your people.

It is important that all elements of the New Zealand Curriculum are used as the framework in designing your local curriculum. This ensures you're supporting the strengths of all your learners.

### It's an ongoing process

At the heart of local curriculum design is including what works and improving learning for all students.

You may not find what works best immediately or for all your students. Understanding that this is a journey means you can continue to challenge and evaluate your ideas, systems, and processes.

### What does "good" look like?

A school's local curriculum is likely to be well-designed when:

- principals and teachers, along with the community, can show what they want their students to learn and how their curriculum is designed to achieve this
- learning is personalised and inclusive; taking into account students' aspirations, interests, identities, languages, and cultures
- the long view is taken: each student's ultimate learning success is more important than the coverage of particular achievement objectives
- it is manageable and realistic.

You can't just pick up what another school has done. There's no recipe. What we might do will be different to you because of our community, our students, our location. The process of giving effect to the national curriculum is about making it work in your school.

**Principal**



The best thing we did was not say, "We're finished", as different aspects of practice were reviewed. Staff now view constantly evolving approaches as a hallmark of educational practice.

**Associate Principal**





## High-impact practices for designing a quality local curriculum

It can be difficult to know where to focus your attention when designing or reviewing your local curriculum.

The four high-impact practices on page 7, taken from the Local Curriculum Design Toolkit, offer ways for you to strengthen your local curriculum.



Make sure you sign up to the **Local Curriculum Design Toolkit**, so you can explore the toolkit in more detail.

### Important things to note

- Just get started – reviewing one part of the curriculum inevitably leads to thinking about the other parts.
- There is no single way to review a curriculum or assessment practices.
- Time is a significant consideration – it takes time for teachers to understand the need for change and to adapt their practices.
- Curriculum design and review is complex – you won't necessarily find what works best right away.
- Embed small changes and then build on them.

## High-impact practices using the New Zealand Curriculum as a framework



### Enable relationships for learning

Enrich your students' learning opportunities by fostering learning-focused relationships within your school and the wider community and iwi.

Use the resources you have available – people, expertise, and materials – to enrich your local curriculum.



### Strengthen collaborative inquiry

Use a systematic inquiry approach to find out what works – when, for whom, and in what context.

Building and sharing knowledge about teaching practices positively impacts on students' learning. This knowledge should be used to review and refine the school's strategic priorities.



### Build coherent pathways

Learning for ākonga should continue over student year levels and across settings.

Be clear to ākonga, teachers, parents, and whānau about the learning students are entitled to.



**Provide rich opportunities for learning** – this practice incorporates the other three high-impact practices. Rich opportunities to learn increase the breadth, depth, and complexity of learning experiences for ākonga as they progress along their learning pathways. Design challenging and rigorous learning opportunities. Encourage your students to contribute to the community to enable beneficial outcomes for them and for your community.

In the following pages, we will explore these high-impact practices in more detail: "Enable relationships for learning", "Build coherent pathways", and "Provide rich opportunities for learning".

For further information on "Strengthen collaborative inquiry", see the [Local Curriculum Design Toolkit](#).

# Using the high-impact practices to design and review your local curriculum

## Understanding the New Zealand Curriculum

Your local curriculum needs to reflect the intentions of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). The NZC vision, principles, values, key competencies, and learning areas need to be expressed in your local curriculum in ways that build on the strengths and meet the aspirations of your learners and their families and whānau.

### Think about these questions as you lead your review:

- How do we ensure that the full extent of the New Zealand Curriculum is expressed in our local curriculum?
- How do we ensure our classroom learning helps students understand Te Tiriti o Waitangi – its past, present, and future – and helps them live the Treaty as citizens of Aotearoa?
- How do we give all our learners rich opportunities for learning across the curriculum?
- How do we provide clear learning pathways across the learning areas and the curriculum levels?
- How do we integrate the principles, values, key competencies, and learning areas in our classroom programmes?
- Are we up to speed with the new digital technologies curriculum content in the technology learning area?

### Further resources for guidance

[NZC Online](#) provides research, tools, and resources to help you understand the New Zealand Curriculum and bring it to life in your school, in your own way.

[NZC Online Principles](#) spotlight helps you reflect on the implementation of the NZC principles at your school.

[NZC Online Digital technologies](#) spotlight explores the revised technology learning area, helping you understand the new digital technologies content and the support available.



## Activity >>

### Reviewing how you integrate the NZC with your local curriculum

>> Consider the ways your local curriculum plan integrates the New Zealand Curriculum and creates rich opportunities for all students. Focus on:

- the NZC principles
- the NZC values
- key competencies
- learning areas and progression in these areas (including the digital technologies curriculum content)
- effective pedagogy.



>> Strengthen your local curriculum plan by:

- analysing the aspects in your plan – looking at what is being well integrated and where there is potential for rich learning
- comparing it with other plans across the school
- discussing how the NZC aspects have been deliberately integrated into these plans to identify the school's shared views and priorities
- discussing how you will activate this plan.

### Read Oratia School's story of integrating their local curriculum with the NZC.

Leaders and teachers at Oratia School carefully integrated all parts of the New Zealand Curriculum with their own local values, while prioritising the principles or key competencies that delivered the most benefit to their children.

From *Keeping children engaged and achieving through rich curriculum inquiries* (ERO, 2018).



## High-impact practice: Enable relationships for learning

To enable relationships for learning across the community, it is important to seek input from students, parents, whānau, iwi, and hapū as you shape your local curriculum. This ensures that the interests and needs of learners, the values and aspirations of parents and whānau, and the ideas and resources of the wider community influence decision making around teaching and learning. A good way to start is to review your relationships and identify those that are critical to the success of your local curriculum.

### Think about these questions as you lead your review:

- How do we build partnerships with parents, whānau, iwi, hapū, and the wider community?
- How do we ensure that everyone in our community feels a sense of ownership for our local curriculum?
- How do we ensure that we are being inclusive and culturally responsive to our students, parents, and whānau?
- How do we make use of our community resources and connections, such as with different cultures, businesses, organisations, professionals, and service providers?

### Find out how staff at Te Akau ki Papamoa School [reflect their vision and work with community resources](#).

Staff at Te Akau ki Papamoa School place a strong emphasis on relationships between whānau, learners, staff, and their community. Their vision of "leading me to lead my learning" challenges students to take responsibility for their lifelong learning journey. Their philosophy of "know me before you teach me" inspires teachers to create a positive learning environment where all learners can celebrate success. The vision statement of Te Akau ki Papamoa School is illustrated in a mural that strongly reflects the school's valuing of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.

## Activity >>

### Getting to know your community

#### >> Review your relationships.

- Complete the [community engagement starter survey](#) on NZC Online.
- Consider the relationships you have with parents and whānau. How could you get to know your community better?

#### >> Create a map of community resources.

- Use colour-coded flags or markers to identify different types of resources within your community.
- Which teachers use each resource/have contact with the resource (for example, a local conservation person)?
- Which year levels use each resource? Why?
- What resources are critical to the success of teaching and learning at your school? Who do you need to be in contact with?
- What resources are over-utilised in ways that don't enhance learning?
- Which topics being taught this term could be enhanced through local connections? Make a database of topics and possible connections and allocate staff to investigate.

#### Further resources for guidance

[NZC Online blog](#) explores the different ways that schools can involve their community in designing their local curriculum.

[Tataiako](#) provides support for building and sustaining genuine and productive relationships with whānau and iwi.

[Tapasā](#) supports teachers to become more culturally aware, confident, and competent when engaging with Pasifika learners and their parents, families, and communities.

[Te Takanga o te Wā](#) (Māori History Guidelines for Years 1-8) is written for primary school teachers to support teaching and learning of local history, including building collaborative relationships with iwi and hapū.



## High-impact practice: Build coherent pathways



A local curriculum can enrich learning opportunities for ākonga and prepare them for lifelong learning by ensuring coherence and continuity of progress, both over the years and across settings. It can be used to describe the learning your community believes is too important to leave to chance, and can specify what this learning looks like at critical points.

Teachers can use this description of the most important learning to design rich opportunities for students to develop their conceptual understandings, competencies, and skills.

### Think about these questions as you lead your review:

- How do we use our vision to create coherent learning pathways?
- How do we ensure our school is ready to provide rich learning for all learners?
- How do we know we have prepared all our students for their next learning step as they transition from our school?

### Read about the strategies **Sylvia Park School** uses to monitor students' development in the **key competencies in order to better understand progression.**

Leaders and teachers at Sylvia Park School reviewed how they were monitoring the key competencies and understanding student progress – trying different strategies until they found the right fit for their students. This example prompts reflective questions such as "How can you involve your students when assessing key competencies?"

A shared vision is not an idea ... it is rather a force in people's hearts ... at its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question "What do we want to create?"

**Peter Senge, Systems Scientist**

## Activity >>

What is the most important learning that we can't leave to chance?

### Reviewing how your school vision is reflected in your local curriculum

**What's valued by communities is often described in a school's vision. Using this vision to identify the most important learning is one way to guide the development of a coherent pathway.**

#### >> Present your school vision to your staff.

- Discuss the most important learning that enables a young person to "aspire" to this vision. Be as specific as you can. For example, have you considered learning areas, key competencies, and literacy/numeracy knowledge and skills?
- What values underpin the vision?

#### >> Explore what the most important learning associated with the school vision could look like for different year levels and/or learning area groups.

- Ask the teachers responsible for each year level or learning area to describe what the most important learning for their area looks like in the curriculum.
- Capture this information so it can be shared (digitally or in print).
- Use this feedback to examine the different year levels and/or learning area groupings. Consider how a student would experience a broad, rich curriculum. Is the development and progression clear?
- If there are gaps or irregularities, look at other year levels or learning areas to help create consistency and coherence in the language that you use. Your aim will be to get coherence across your setting.
- Check that this term's planning incorporates aspects of the most important learning and link this back to the school's vision.

#### Further resources for guidance

**Simon Sinek's model of inspiring leadership** starts with a golden circle and the question "Why?" You could use this philosophy to revisit your school vision as an entire community.

**NZC Online blog** describes the OECD's "7 Principles of Learning" and explores what schooling, teaching, and learning should look like in this rapidly changing world.





## High-impact practice: Provide rich opportunities for learning

To provide your students with rich opportunities for learning, you need to know their strengths, identities, needs, and aspirations.

This involves discovering as much as you can about them, listening to their voices, and consulting with their parents and whānau. Once you know your learners, you can begin a deeper inquiry into the rich learning opportunities you are providing and possible areas for change.

### Think about these questions as you lead your review:

- How well do we know our learners' strengths and identities and their needs and aspirations for the year ahead?
- How can we provide rich opportunities for learning based on our learners' strengths, identities, needs, and aspirations?
- What knowledge and skills do we need and what actions should we take to help all our learners grow?

### **Find out how Papatoetoe North School designed a spiral curriculum that connects their students' lives.**

Leaders, teachers, and parents at Papatoetoe North School have designed a responsive curriculum that connects to students' lives and builds on their prior understandings, cultural identities, and out-of-school experiences.

From *Keeping children engaged and achieving through rich curriculum inquiries* (ERO, 2018).

## Activity >>

### Using what you know about students' strengths and aspirations to make local curriculum design decisions

At the beginning of a school year, teachers often talk with students and their whānau about their goals, interests, and aspirations. In groups, use that feedback to discuss what you know about your students. If you don't have enough information about all your students, find out more about their interests and ambitions.

- What are some common goals and aspirations?
- What are some outlier interests (maybe of only one or two students)?
- How can these interests be incorporated in the teaching and learning for this term? For example, do some students have the potential to lead/teach and provide opportunities for other students to learn?
- What opportunities do students have to extend their expertise in their areas of interests?

### Further resources for guidance:

[NZC Online](#) provides guidance on how to identify the needs, interests and priorities of your students to help you create a responsive local curriculum.



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



- **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

If you want to share your feedback or have a story about local curriculum, contact: [progress.achievement@education.govt.nz](mailto:progress.achievement@education.govt.nz)

#### 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 further support and information.

#### Share



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