

The New Zealand Curriculum

Update



Teaching and Learning

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Welcome to *The New Zealand Curriculum Update*

Curriculum Updates support school leaders and teachers as they work to design and review their school curriculum in line with the New Zealand Curriculum and with current knowledge and understandings about effective classroom teaching.

Curriculum Updates are published in the *Education Gazette* and are available online at:

http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/curriculum_updates

This Update supports schools to explore and enact the curriculum principle of high expectations.



The principle of high expectations

The curriculum supports and empowers all students to learn and achieve personal excellence, regardless of their individual circumstances.

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The Education Review Office (2011) reports that high expectations, learning to learn, and inclusion are the curriculum principles most evident in New Zealand schools. Most schools appear to have high expectations for their students (ERO, 2010 and 2011). Nevertheless, in many schools these expectations are not yet being realised through all students achieving to their full potential.

Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003) shows that inappropriately low expectations for students may be self-fulfilling, leading teachers to select approaches that slow learning and narrow its breadth. However, high expectations, though necessary for learning success, are not sufficient in themselves and can

even be counter-productive when learners blame themselves for not meeting them.

High expectations should be supported by high-quality teaching. Projects such as Te Kotahitanga show the powerful effect of high expectations when accompanied by effective teaching developed through collaborative, evidence-based, whole-school professional development (Bishop et al., 2007).

Alton-Lee (2003) warns schools to avoid defining achievement expectations in terms of academic outcomes alone. *The New Zealand Curriculum* points to a range of outcomes that are valued by our society, including social skills and outcomes related to well-being and cultural identity.

Guiding questions He pātai

- In what ways do you demonstrate that you have high expectations for all your students?
- How do your teaching practices enable students to meet those expectations?



Expectations must have a sound basis

Learning involves making connections between prior knowledge and new information. Graham Nuthall (2007), building on Adrienne Alton-Lee's (1984) doctoral research, studied students' perspectives on the classroom, uncovering the remarkable differences in the knowledge, interests, experiences, and motivating influences that individual students bring to their learning. To plan learning experiences that will give all students opportunities to make connections to new concepts, teachers need to understand what each student brings to their learning. This involves gathering and analysing a wide range of data – not just about achievement but also information derived from observations of learners and conversations with them and with their peers, families, and whānau.

When working with such data, teachers and school leaders need to examine their own assumptions – especially to tease out assumptions they are not aware of holding – for any that may lead to inappropriately high or low expectations for particular learners. This is especially important when establishing expectations for students who have special education needs, who are English language learners, or whose cultural background differs significantly from that of their teachers.

As human development is seldom straightforward and linear, it is also important to closely track individual student progress, reviewing and revising expectations in collaboration with learners and their families.

> CASE STUDY

Tawa College: High expectations for diverse students

Tawa College's statement of purpose declares its aim to "develop students' intellectual abilities, personal maturity and social responsibility in an educational environment which promotes achievement, resilience, self-esteem and service". The school's programmes promote high achievement in a broad range of domains. For example, the formal mentoring programme, in which year 13 learners support those in years 9 and 10, has both social and academic benefits for everyone involved.

The school's increasingly diverse student population has prompted an ongoing focus, led by the senior leadership team, on catering for diverse needs. Ways of addressing these needs have included targeted goal setting for individual students, differentiated planning, and smaller classes for junior students identified as having the greatest literacy and numeracy needs.

The learning support staff explicitly focus on realising the potential of students with specific needs for progress and achievement, and ensure that it is realised through initiatives such as professional support for teacher aides, a parent support network, and close tracking and monitoring of English language learners. A focus on Māori and Pasifika

students has included improved tracking of their achievement and whole-school professional development for teachers.

The school has much to celebrate. Its NCEA results are consistently higher than the national average. Thanks to strong parent support, over 60 percent of students participate in its sports programme, a significant number of them at national level. Its arts programme – especially music – is renowned in the Wellington region. When students meet expectations and exceed them, their success is shared: on the school website, in newsletters and assemblies, on honours boards, in the prospectus, and in the local papers.

In an interview posted on the local community website Tawa Link, 2011 head girl Elyjana Roach was asked why she liked Tawa College. Her response shows that much of the school's success stems from its expectation that all will reach their potential – and from the support it gives them to get there:

I like the level of expectation from teachers and just the general atmosphere to do well.

> CASE STUDY

BES Exemplar 1: Developing communities of mathematical inquiry

BES Exemplar 1 focuses on two teachers at a small, multicultural primary school who took part in professional learning on developing their classroom learning communities. As a result of this collaborative inquiry, their students greatly accelerated their progress while growing in their identity as mathematicians. The exemplar shows how the teachers changed their expectations as they observed their students' improved mathematical proficiency. One teacher later reflected:

I thought I had high expectations ... I have realised I [had] low expectations.

The students themselves also developed high expectations for their own outcomes.

You can find this exemplar at www.educationcounts.govt.nz under the links "BES" and "BES exemplars".

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?



High expectations for gifted and talented learners

The Education Review Office (2011) found that, although most schools are committed to the principle of high expectations, teachers focus more often on meeting the learning needs of at-risk students than on extending the more able. This is consistent with other research indicating that the learning needs of gifted and talented students are often overlooked (ERO, 2008 a and b; Riley et al., 2004). It is especially so for certain groups of gifted and talented learners, such as Māori and Pasifika students, students in rural areas, and students who have a physical or sensory disability or a learning difficulty.

To support gifted and talented learners to achieve to their potential, school leaders and teachers need to develop programmes that are tailored to these students' individual strengths and interests. This includes taking into account their identities, languages, and cultures.

Schools also need to consider the effect on students of how they see themselves and of how they are seen by their peers and by the adults around them. While high expectations are important, gifted students' own and others' expectations of them can create pressures that lead to fear of failure. Some learners hide their giftedness in order to gain peer acceptance (girls in early- to mid-adolescence and Māori and Pasifika students may be particularly vulnerable to such pressures). When setting expectations for these students, schools must also be sensitive to their emotional and social needs and explore ways to allow for them.

Helpful resources

- The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) programme
www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/BES
- Te Kotahitanga
<http://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz>
- The Graham Nuthall Classroom Research Trust
www.nuthalltrust.org.nz/index.shtml

You can find information about these suggested resources and the references for this Update in the online version at http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/curriculum_updates

The online version of this Update also lists a range of new resources to support schools in setting, and working towards, high expectations for their gifted and talented learners.

> CASE STUDY

Good Practice at Kelston Girls' College

Kelston Girls' College is a multicultural secondary school in Waitakere City. Principal Linda Fox is adamant about the importance of investing in the social, cultural, and academic growth of all students and supporting them to meet high expectations in their pursuit of excellence.

Linda has a particular interest in promoting the high achievement of gifted and talented learners. The school belongs to a cluster that provides professional development for teachers and mentoring for gifted and talented learners with social, emotional, or behavioural difficulties. Provision for gifted and talented learners is firmly embedded in school programmes and is subject to ongoing self-review.

A key part of this policy is the provision of high-motivation classes (HMC) for academically gifted year 9–10 learners, in which they are challenged to use higher-order thinking skills. In year 10, high-motivation classes are also offered for some Pasifika students and for Māori students studying te reo. There is also a high-performing sports class. Enrichment activities have included the Amazing Race, organised by HMC students for local primary and intermediate school students. This activity has challenged their leadership skills and their understanding of Māori and Chinese culture.

At higher levels, gifted learners work separately in their subject classes but come together daily in a whānau group to continue to support, motivate, and extend each other. Other extension, enrichment, and community-based programmes ensure that these students' pastoral as well as academic needs are met. Gifted students at the school say that their teachers have high expectations of them so they are challenged, not bored.

The school understands that potential can be hidden and can emerge at different times for different students. Before they entered the HMC programme, some students were at risk of not achieving, but they have now learned to set goals and take responsibility for themselves. One student who had been expelled from her previous school was identified as gifted and talented and placed in a high-motivation class. The support she received from her teacher, her peers, and a social worker enabled her to settle at school and re-engage in learning.

This case study draws heavily on one developed by ERO to exemplify high-quality practice in the school's provision for gifted and talented students. The full case study can be found, along with six others, at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/year/2008

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> References and other useful resources

References

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New resources to support high expectations for gifted and talented learners

The following new resources are being developed to help schools set and support high expectations for their gifted learners. For further information, schools can also go to the TKI Gifted and Talented community at <http://gifted.tki.org.nz>

Gifted and Talented Online – for students

<http://gifted.tki.org.nz/For-students>

This section of TKI's Gifted and Talented community includes a needs analysis questionnaire for students to complete themselves. They then receive a PDF report that they can email to parents and teachers and keep as their own record to help support them on their journey.

Provider database

<http://gifted.tki.org.nz/Providers-in-your-region>

Users can search this database for providers of gifted programmes in their region.

National Standards resources on gifted learners

A set of resources and guidelines for teachers and school leaders is being developed to help them integrate their use of the National Standards with effective approaches for working with gifted learners. These resources include a self-review tool for schools, online case studies, and ways to help schools share their knowledge and expertise with each other.

Reversioning of *Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools*

Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools (2000) is a Ministry of Education handbook to support schools and teachers with helping their gifted learners to reach their potential. While the information in the handbook is sound, since its publication the knowledge base has grown. In particular, we know more about the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and that teachers and school leaders need to conduct ongoing collaborative inquiry into their expectations for their learners, their expectations for their own practice, and how far they are meeting those expectations. The handbook is being updated to take account of this new knowledge. The TKI Gifted and Talented site will then be redesigned to reflect some of the core concepts in the revised handbook.

Websites

The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) programme

www.educationcounts.gov.nz/goto/BES

The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) programme brings together research-based evidence from New Zealand and elsewhere to explain what works in education and why. Eight best evidence syntheses have been completed to date, each focused on a significant aspect of educational practice. The programme is also developing a growing range of resources to support educators to incorporate the BES findings in their professional learning. These resources include a set of BES summaries published by the International Academy of Education and a new series of BES exemplars, which illuminate eleven research-derived "dimensions of quality teaching".

Te Kotahitanga

<http://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz/>

Te Kotahitanga is a response to the underachievement of Māori students in English-medium schools. The programme demonstrates that student achievement improves when, instead of deficit theorising, teachers use collaborative professional development to construct a culturally responsive pedagogy.

The Te Kotahitanga publication series is available at www.educationcounts.gov.nz/publications/series/9977

The Graham Nuthall Classroom Research Trust

www.nuthalltrust.org.nz/index.shtml

Inspired by then doctoral student Adrienne Alton-Lee, Graham Nuthall took up a new approach to educational research that focused on the experiences of students. Through a unique method of data collection, in which students wore broadcast microphones, he and his colleagues were able to explore the "hidden world of the learner", including their private talk among themselves and their interactions with their peers. His findings included the discovery that what students learn is highly influenced by their peers and by the knowledge they bring to their learning. The Graham Nuthall Trust continues Graham's work in exploring the impact of classroom interactions on student learning.