TE IHUWAKA | Education Evaluation Centre

# A new chapter:

## How well are the changes to English and maths going?

EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

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# Contents

# Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and thank all the school leaders, teachers, students, parents and whānau, and others who shared their experiences, views, and insights through interviews, discussions, and surveys. We thank you for giving your time and sharing your stories so that others may benefit from your successes and challenges.

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# Executive summary

Literacy and numeracy skills are key to future achievement, earnings, health, and other outcomes. Developing these foundational skills effectively at primary school sets children up to succeed later. Domestic and international evidence shows that significant improvement is needed to get New Zealand students to the expected levels in reading, writing, and maths. They also show the scale of the challenge. Improvements are being made, and encouragingly, they are starting to have an impact.

The Government has made a series of changes to improve achievement across New Zealand, as part of Teaching the Basics Brilliantly. The changes include refreshing the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMoA), and requiring schools to teach one hour a day on each of reading, writing and maths.

The refreshed English and Te Reo Rangatira (Years 0–6) and maths and pāngarau (Years 0–8) learning areas were published in October 2024. Schools were required to use the refreshed learning areas from Term 1, 2025. While it is still early days, school teachers and leaders have worked hard to change what and how they teach and are already seeing the impacts of the changes.

## Are schools using the refreshed English and maths learning areas?

**Already, nearly all schools have started using the refreshed curriculum for English and maths, and teachers are changing their practice, using the new content and strategies.**

- Nearly all schools report they have started teaching the refreshed English learning area for students in Years 0–6 (98 percent), and the refreshed curriculum for maths in Years 0–8 (98 percent).
- All the components of English are taught by more than nine out of ten teachers.
- All the components of maths are taught by more than eight out of ten teachers. Teachers focus on number more than any other part of maths.
- More than eight in ten teachers report they have changed ***how*** they teach English (88 percent) and maths (85 percent). Nearly all teachers (more than 97 percent) use the range of evidence-backed teaching strategies that are part of the curriculum changes.

- Teachers and leaders report a significant change is their increased focus on explicit teaching. Nearly all teachers of Years 0–3 students report using strategies for explicit teaching often.

**Importantly, teachers across all school types, sizes, and locations are teaching all the components of the refreshed curriculum, using the range of evidence-backed teaching strategies that are part of the curriculum changes.**

- Often, the Education Review Office (ERO) sees differences between schools' adoption of change. But in this review, ERO found that teachers across socio-economic communities, different school types and in both urban and rural areas are all teaching the refreshed curriculum for both English and maths.
- Teachers are also using the same strategies of the science of learning across the country.

**In English, what is taught at different year levels is what is expected – more complex components are taught more for older students. In maths, there is not yet the expected level of shift to more complex components as students get older.**

- As expected, more fundamental components of English like word recognition are taught more for students in Years 0–3. Older students are taught more comprehension, writing craft, and critical analysis than younger students.
- In maths, teachers focus on the foundational components across all year levels. For instance, in Years 7–8, three-quarters of teachers (75 percent) teach number 'a lot', when we would expect them to teach more of things like algebra, probability and statistics. We found this is due to a combination of factors:
  - The change in what and how number is taught is greater than the change in other components of maths, so some teachers are prioritising this.
  - Students need greater support with number. Number has been a relative weakness for New Zealand students, and students are not yet at the level they need to be.
  - Teachers are more confident to start with changing their practice in teaching number compared to other aspects of maths.

## What are the early impacts?

**It is still early days, but there are positive signs that students' achievement and engagement in English and maths is improving.**

- Phonics checks show a significant improvement in student achievement. In Term 1, 2025, only a third of students (36 percent) achieved at or above the curriculum expectation after 20 weeks of school. In Term 2, over half of students (51 percent) achieved at or above, and in Term 3, this number rose even further (58 percent). The biggest increase was in the proportion of students exceeding curriculum expectations, which more than doubled from Term 1 to Term 3 (from 20 percent to 43 percent).
- Half of teachers, across year levels, report improved achievement in English (54 percent) and in maths (51 percent) compared to last year.

- Parents also agree. Just over three quarters of parents report their child's progress has improved in English (77 percent) and maths (75 percent) since one hour a day was implemented.
- Students are also more engaged in their learning. Almost half (47 percent) of teachers report improved student engagement in English, and just under three in five (56 percent) teachers report improved student engagement in maths. Teachers told us that structured literacy approaches have improved attention and behaviour in the classroom.
- Nine out of ten students report finding their lessons in English and maths interesting, showing high levels of engagement.

**Most parents know how to help their child at home, and do. Parents are less confident helping with maths, and would like more guidance.**

- Nine in ten parents and whānau members report they know how to help their child at home with reading and writing (93 percent) and maths (89 percent).
- Almost nine in ten parents report helping their child at home with reading, writing (93 percent) and maths (85 percent). For both English and maths, we heard that parents and whānau like to know what content is being covered at school, so they can supplement this learning at home. They would like more guidance to help their child with maths.

## How are schools doing it?

ERO found that schools are achieving this change through:

1) Increasing the time spent on reading, writing and maths.
2) Planning, setting expectations and providing support.
3) Accessing impactful resources and support.

### 1) Increasing the time

**Encouragingly, around one third of teachers report they have increased the time spent on reading, writing and maths, since the requirement to do an hour a day. Even more schools in lower socio-economic communities have increased the time spent.**

- Around a third of teachers report an increase in time spent teaching reading, writing, and maths. For many teachers, they report that this is an increase in time spent on explicit teaching.
- Almost half of teachers in low socio-economic schools have increased the time spent on maths, compared to just under two in five teachers in the middle of the socio-economic scale and a third of schools serving high socio-economic communities.
- Importantly, around two-thirds of teachers report they do an hour a day every day for reading (60 percent) and maths (67 percent).

## 2) Planning, setting expectations, and providing support

### Most schools have expectations and plans in place. More school leaders are supporting teachers to make the changes to maths, than to English.

- Nine out of ten leaders (90 percent) report they know what they need to do to implement the new curriculum for English (89 percent) and maths (95 percent). Most schools have a plan, and someone to lead delivery of the plan.
- School leaders told us that they know what they need to do to implement the curriculum because of the information they have received from different sources, such as the guidance documents, communications from the Ministry of Education, and through peer networks.
- Nearly all school leaders have set expectations for teachers to use the new learning areas (85 percent for English, 95 percent for maths). Leaders told us that, while they are balancing competing demands on teachers' time, they are clear with teachers that they are expected to be delivering the new curriculum.
- Leaders are supporting teachers more for maths, as many were already using some form of structured literacy approach, so the change for maths was greater.

## 3) Impactful resources and support

### Guidance and resources for English and maths are making a big impact for teachers who have accessed it.

- Over eight in ten teachers (82 percent) have accessed PLD on structured literacy approaches and over three quarters of teachers (76 percent) have accessed the Ministry's maths PLD. More than nine out of ten teachers have accessed professional development for English (92 percent) or maths (91 percent) more generally. Leaders and teachers told us that they find the clarity and practicality of the PLD particularly useful.
- Teachers who have accessed guidance for English are 3.5 times more likely to have changed their practice. Teachers who accessed any resources for maths were nearly 4 times more likely to report changing their teaching practice.

### Professional development on structured literacy approaches improves teachers' knowledge and confidence.

Teachers who participated in the Ministry's professional development on structured literacy approaches grew their knowledge of the approaches. Before the development, teachers had 60 percent correct answers on knowledge questions, and this increased to 78 percent following the development. Teachers also reported improved confidence to:

- implement structured literacy approaches (a shift from 50 percent before the professional development to 85 percent after)
- use evidence and data to identify next teaching steps (70 percent to 87 percent)
- use evidence and data to identify students needing additional support (74 percent to 89 percent).

### The PLD to support teachers with the English and maths learning areas is useful, and more useful than other PLD.

- Nearly all teachers report PLD for supporting them to implement the refreshed English and maths learning areas is useful:
  - 96 percent report PLD on structured literacy approaches is useful.
  - 91 percent report PLD on maths is useful.
- This compares to eight of ten teachers who report PLD is useful overall.
- Teachers whose most recent external PLD was on English report they use what they have learnt every day (71 percent), use it with all students (65 percent) and see improvements in student outcomes (61 percent).

## Where do schools need more support?

Overall, teachers and leaders are embracing the changes. There are three areas, however, where teachers need more support:

1) To teach maths.
2) To help teachers in small and rural schools.
3) To enable and extend students' learning.

## 1) Teaching maths

### Teachers report needing more support to teach maths, and to fill in gaps in students' learning.

- More than eight out of ten teachers teach all components of maths.
- Concerningly, so far, teachers focus on number, and all other components are taught less. The focus on teaching number does not shift, even in more senior levels.
- This focus on number is not new. Teachers also focused on number in the previous maths learning area, where nearly all Year 5 students had been taught elements of number, and significantly fewer had been taught other topics.[1]
- Number has been an area of challenge for Year 5 students over time, and teachers and leaders report the revised curriculum expects even *more* from students than the previous.
- Some teachers are less confident to teach complex maths content, and are more comfortable teaching number.

## 2) To help teachers in small and rural schools

**Small schools and rural schools face bigger challenges in implementing the change. For example, they are less likely to have someone leading implementation, or to have a plan for implementing the changes.**

- Only eight in ten small schools have a plan for implementing the changes for maths (84 percent), or someone leading delivery on the plan (78 percent). This is even lower for implementing English, where only seven in ten (69 percent) of small schools have a plan.

## 3) To enable and extend students learning

**Some teachers need further support to know how to enable students to reach the curriculum level for their year, and extend students' learning.**

- It is still early days for the curriculum, and teachers and leaders are not always sure what the core components of structured literacy or maths are, and where there is flexibility.
- To manage this, leaders told us they support teachers to contextualise what they learn in PLD in their classroom. They put effort in to agreeing common practices and ensuring that teachers have consistent messages, especially if teachers shift between schools.
- Some teachers report being unsure about adapting their teaching to meet students' needs, in particular, to support or extend students in multi-year classrooms, or when there is a wide range of ability within a year group.
- They are also uncertain about adapting for neurodivergent or disabled learners. They want further guidance for when and how to escalate support for students who need additional help and more resources to enable this.

**It is earlier days for kura and rumaki. While they generally support the changes, leaders and teachers report challenges accessing the supports and using them in their specific settings.**

While positive about the support they have received, leaders and teachers report some significant barriers to access the PLD, guidance, and resources they need to implement the changes.

Leaders shared that PLD, guidance, and resources for Māori-medium provision do not necessarily reflect the breadth of the settings students are learning in. This means there is little change in what and how students are being taught. Teachers in rumaki told us they find it especially challenging. They often translate and adapt English-medium PLD, guidance, and resources for their classes, as they have greater access to these.

Some settings are managing to make it work. Experienced leaders told us that where changes have begun, it is because of the capability and experience of both their leaders and teachers.

## What key lessons have we learned about effective curriculum change?

By reflecting on what was particularly successful through implementation the English and maths learning area changes, and where there have been particular challenges, we identified 3 key lessons to inform future curriculum change.

### 1) A well-designed curriculum change package can be highly impactful in igniting change across all schools.

- A clear purpose is key to successful curriculum change. This needs to be communicated effectively so that the purpose is understood by teachers, leaders, families, and the wider community.
- Signalling and sequencing of change works. A curriculum change package works best when it is supported by evidence and tailored for New Zealand's students. It needs to be supported by a well-planned sequence of changes, and the right support needs to be available at the right time.
- Strong leadership can drive change in schools. Schools make change best when supported by a leader who is responsible for driving the curriculum change and setting clear expectations. Good leaders reinforce and embed changes through supports and resources, and set aside time for teachers to embed learning.

### 2) Building teacher capability is essential for successful curriculum change, which makes a difference for students.

- High-quality PLD can build capability and motivation. PLD can change practice in schools when it builds knowledge, motivates teachers to use what they learn, develops teaching techniques, and provides structures and strategies to embed good practice.
- Providing targeted support to teachers who most need it can ensure change happens in all classrooms. This includes building foundational capability where teachers lack confidence or knowledge.

### 3) Tailored approaches for schools with greater challenges are key to generating change where it is needed most.

- With support, it is possible to achieve the biggest shift in schools facing the most challenges. These supports can work well when provided through a national change package.
- Parent engagement can support the implementation of change. Tailored communication to communities from trusted sources, such as from teachers and school leaders, can be the most successful.

# Recommendations

ERO used these findings and key lessons learned to make 12 recommendations across six areas. One term in, there is already widespread adoption of the changes, and teachers are changing their practice across the country. We can build on this success.

## Area 1: Continue doing what works

To help maintain focus on the things that work, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 1:** The Ministry of Education continue to clearly communicate the purpose for the changes.

**Recommendation 2:** The Ministry continue to provide tightly defined, centrally commissioned, high quality PLD.

**Recommendation 3:** The Ministry of Education continue to provide a package of support for school leaders and teachers, so they know what to do and have the skills and resources to do it.

**Recommendation 4:** The Ministry continue to focus support for schools in low socio-economic communities.

## Area 2: Strengthen teachers' capability in maths

To make sure teachers have the capability to improve student achievement in maths, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 5:** The Ministry develop and implement a package of supports for leaders and teachers to raise their capability to teach more complex maths.

## Area 3: Support teachers to enable and extend students appropriately

To strengthen teachers' capability to meet the needs of all students, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 6:** The Ministry provide a package of support, including PLD, guidance, and resources, to help leaders and teachers enable students to catch up, or extend their learning.

**Recommendation 7:** The Ministry ensure adequate and appropriate specialist supports are available for students who need it, and teachers have guidance to know when it is needed.

**Recommendation 8:** Initial teacher education should have a strong focus on the teaching practices needed to enable and extend students' learning.

## Area 4: Ensure support reaches the schools and teachers that most need it

To better support small and isolated schools, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 9:** The Ministry develop a new model for enabling small or isolated schools to access the PLD and support they need to implement curriculum changes.

## Area 5: Strengthen and prioritise resources for implementing TMoA

To help ensure kura and rumaki have the knowledge, skills and resources to implement TMoA, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 10:** The Ministry work to increase access and uptake of resources and support for embedding TMoA changes, especially focusing on tailored supports for pāngarau.

## Area 6: Embed and sustain the changes

To make sure progress continues, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 11:** The Ministry provide guidance to parents, to help them more effectively support their child's maths learning at home.

**Recommendation 12:** ERO and the Ministry continue to monitor schools' implementation of the curriculum changes, to identify and take any action needed to ensure schools can embed and sustain the changes to practice.

# About this report

Literacy and numeracy are foundational skills that allow students to access and engage in all other subjects. Strong literacy and numeracy in primary school sets students up to succeed in the later years of school and in life beyond school. The Government has introduced changes to both our national curriculums, the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa to lift New Zealand students' achievement in reading, writing, and maths, and has instructed ERO to provide an independent review of the impact of the changes.

The Education Review Office (ERO), in partnership with the Ministry of Education, wanted to know how changes to the curriculums are going and what lessons we can learn from the early stages of implementation. This report describes what we found about the changes to teaching, and the early impacts for students. It also looks at why teachers and schools are making the changes, and what will support the ongoing implementation of the curriculum changes.

ERO is responsible for reviewing and reporting on the performance of early learning services, schools, and kura. As part of this role, ERO looks at how the education system supports teachers and schools to provide quality education for students. From Term 4, 2024 to Term 2, 2025, we looked at how recent curriculum changes were going in schools and what lessons we could learn from the early implementation.

## What we looked at

ERO is working in partnership with the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) to evaluate the implementation of the refreshed curriculum. This national review is part of a multi-year review that provides real-time insights to inform and adjust the curriculum changes, as they are happening. The lessons can be used to inform implementation of future curriculum changes.

For this report, we collected data from Term 4, 2024, to Term 2, 2025. We looked at the steps school leaders and teachers were taking to prepare, as well as their early implementation of the new curriculums.

We looked at four key questions:

1) What is being taught from the refreshed learning areas?
2) How are the new learning areas being taught?
3) What are the early impacts for students?
4) What has changed for parents and whānau?

## Where we looked

We have taken a robust, mixed-methods approach to deliver breadth and depth in this review. We collected data from Term 4, 2024 to late in Term 2, 2025 through engagement with curriculum leaders and teachers in schools with students in Years 0–8. We included state and state-integrated schools that teach the New Zealand Curriculum or Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.[a]

In some schools, curriculum leaders are principals or deputy principals. Throughout the report, we simply refer to them as 'leaders'. We also spoke with a range of experts, including curriculum and change experts, and used other evidence and research to support our findings.

### We used a wide range of evidence to deliver this review.

We built our understanding of the early impact of recent curriculum changes through:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Over 6300 survey responses from:** | → 1031 responses from school leaders<br>→ 1122 responses from teachers in Years 0–8<br>→ 2524 responses from parents and whānau of students in Years 0–8<br>→ 1632 responses from students in Years 4–8<br>→ 38 Kura ā Iwi and Kura Motuhake<br>→ 32 Rumaki/reo rua units |
| **More than 500 interviews, including:** | → 113 interviews with school leaders<br>→ 123 interviews with teachers<br>→ 35 interviews with parents and whānau<br>→ 232 interviews with students<br>→ Leaders and teachers at three kura and five rumaki |
| **Site visits at:** | → 36 schools with students in Years 0–8 |
| **Observations of:** | → 54 maths or English lessons in Years 0–8 classes |
| **ERO Evaluation Partner judgments:** | → 432 schools |
| **Data from:** | → 5728 termly Ministry check-in survey responses<br>→ Administrative data from the Ministry, including phonics checks assessments and pre- and post-testing of students and teachers<br>→ An in-depth review of local and international literature<br>→ Ministry of Education guidance and information |

a In this report, we use the term 'rumaki' to refer to all settings that teach some or all the time in te reo Māori, as part of a larger school. This includes 'reorua' or bilingual classes. We use the term 'kura' to refer to Kura-ā-Iwi and Kura Motuhake.

We invited participation from an additional 84 kura or rumaki units who declined to participate at this time. Some of these indicated that they had not yet made sufficient changes at this stage of implementation to be able to report much. The findings in Part 9 of this report relate to those kura and rumaki who engaged.

More details about our methodology are in technical appendix.

## Report structure

This report has nine parts.

- **Part 1** explains **the need to improve literacy and numeracy**. It covers why literacy and numeracy are important in themselves and for other learning. This section also looks at New Zealand students' achievement and the scale of the challenge.
- **Part 2** summarises **the new requirements**, including government targets and important changes.
- **Part 3** breaks down the components of **what is being taught in English and maths**.
- **Part 4** reports on **how English and maths are being taught**.
- **Part 5** reports on early evidence on the **change in student outcomes**. While it is early days for achievement and progress data, this is supported by teacher, parent, and student reports on progress changes.
- **Part 6** reports on the **change for parents**. It covers what parents know about English and maths, how their children are progressing, and how to help at home.
- **Part 7** reports **how schools are delivering the changes**, including implementing an hour a day of reading, writing and maths and steps they are taking to implement and embed changes to curriculum and assessment.
- **Part 8** looks at reports on **how well supported schools and teachers are to make the changes**, including PLD, resources and guidance.
- **Part 9** reports on **what is happening for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa**.
- **Part 10** highlights **the lessons learned from our review** of the reform implementation.
- **Part 11** summarises the key findings, lessons learned, and **makes recommendations**.

# **Part 1:** The need to improve literacy and numeracy

Literacy and numeracy skills are key to future earning, health, wellbeing, and other outcomes. Developing these foundational skills effectively at primary school sets children up to succeed later. Domestic and international evidence shows that significant improvement is needed to get New Zealand students to the expected levels in reading, writing, and maths. They also show the scale of the challenge.

The changes to the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa have a clearly defined and important purpose – to raise student achievement. This section sets out:

1) why literacy and numeracy are important
2) how big the challenge is to raise literacy and numeracy
3) where the biggest challenges are.

## 1) Why are literacy and numeracy important?

### Literacy and numeracy are the foundations for academic and other success.

Literacy and numeracy skills are the foundation for future academic success and are reliable predictors of future earning potential, fulfilment, health, and wellbeing.[2,3] Evidence shows that both literacy and numeracy are linked to future income,[4,5,6] as well as linked to better health and longer life expectancy.[7,8] Low literacy also puts students at risk of bad outcomes, for example, committing a crime.[9]

Students build literacy and numeracy skills in many ways, but the biggest impact on these skills is through English or Te Reo Rangatira (for literacy) and mathematics and statistics (maths)[b] or pāngarau (for numeracy).

### Beginning well in primary school is essential.

We need to ensure early literacy and numeracy are prioritised. Evidence shows the importance of early intervention in primary school in literacy and numeracy skills to prevent attainment gaps from forming and widening later.

b In this report, we use "maths" to refer to the mathematics and statistics learning area of the curriculum.

Gaining a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy in primary school equips students with a solid base from which they can continue to learn and thrive. Grasping literacy skills early allows children to move from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn', which supports them to achieve well across the curriculum.[10] It is essential to ensure that students are highly literate if we want them to be able to access the full breadth of the curriculum and reach their full potential within the education system.[11]

Studies show that early numeracy skills predict outcomes well into adulthood, including the likelihood of completing high school and tertiary education.[12,13,14] Early numeracy skills developed at primary school are also linked to improved problem-solving abilities and critical thinking, which will support achievement across the curriculum and later in life.

## 2) How big is the challenge to raise numeracy and literacy?

### Studies show New Zealand students' achievement in English and maths is poor.

Concerningly, local and international studies show that too few New Zealand students achieve in English and maths, and achievement has declined significantly over time. Although New Zealand still scores above the OECD average, a significant proportion of New Zealand students are failing to meet minimum standards in reading and maths.

New Zealand monitors educational achievement over time through the Curriculum Insights and Progress Study (CIPS), which partners with 160 schools and works with more than 6,000 students each year to build a reliable picture of progress and achievement across the country.

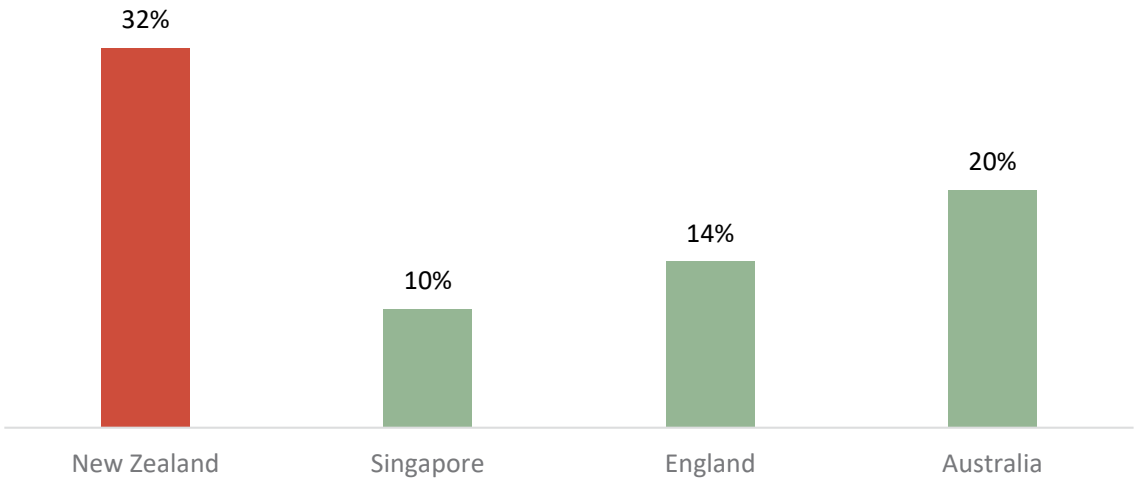
New Zealand students achieve poorly in English and maths. New data from CIPS shows:[15]

- only 22 percent of Year 8 students are at the expected curriculum benchmark for maths. 63 percent are more than a year behind
- only 24 percent of Year 8 students are at the expected curriculum benchmark for writing. 61 percent are more than a year behind
- CIPS data from 2023 shows 47 percent of Year 8 students are at the expected curriculum benchmark for reading. 43 percent are more than a year behind.

New Zealand students are noticeably lagging behind their peers in other countries in literacy. In 2020, it was reported that one-third (32 percent) of Year 5 students failed to meet the intermediate benchmark of proficiency for reading.[c] This is significantly worse than the 10 percent of students failing to meet the benchmark in Singapore, 14 percent in England, and 20 percent in Australia.

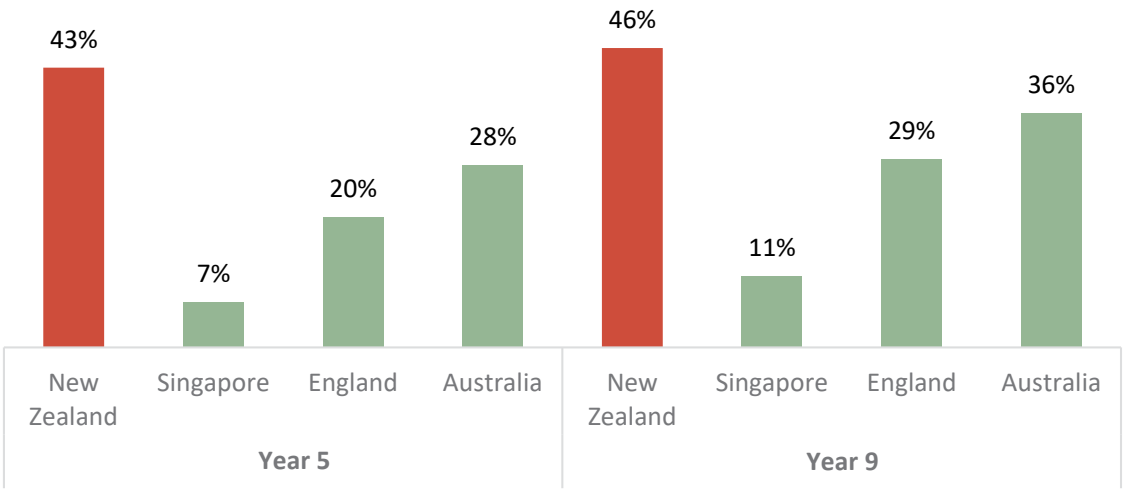
c The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) takes place every five years and looks at reading and literacy ability at Year 5.

**Figure 1:** *Proportion of students who do not meet the intermediate benchmark for reading in 2021 (PIRLS).*




A similar concerning trend can be observed for maths. In 2023, two in five students in Year 5 (43 percent) did not reach the intermediate benchmark of proficiency for maths.[d] This is significantly worse than the seven percent of students failing to meet the benchmark in Singapore, 20 percent in England, and 28 percent in Australia. The pattern continues at Year 9, where nearly half (46 percent) of New Zealand students did not meet the intermediate benchmark. New Zealand students continue to perform significantly worse than those in Singapore (11 percent failed to meet the intermediate benchmark), England (29 percent), or Australia (36 percent).

**Figure 2:** *Proportion of students who do not meet the intermediate benchmark for maths in 2023 (TIMSS).*



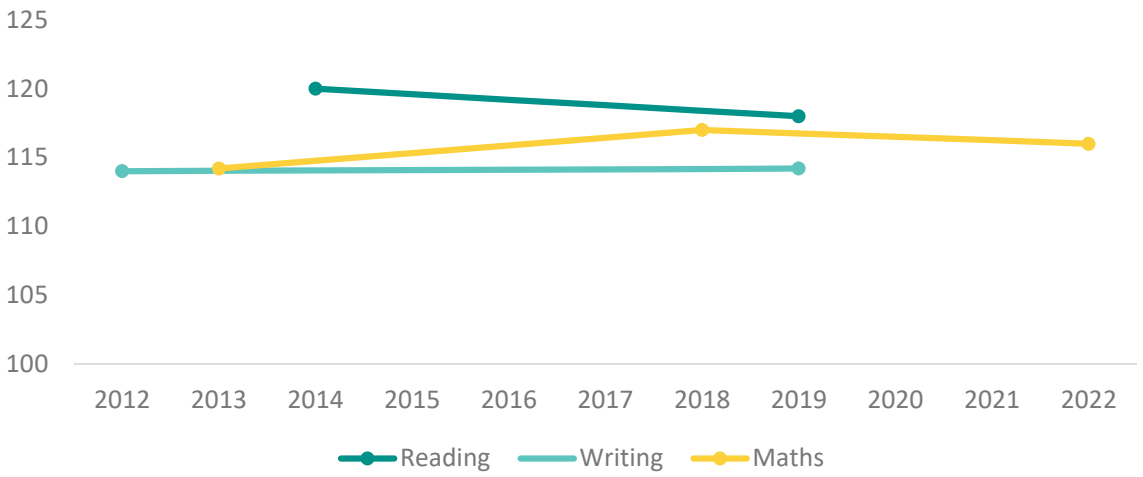

d The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) takes place every four years and looks at proficiency in maths and science at Years 5 and 9.

Poor performance in literacy and numeracy can also be seen in older students. The 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures 15-year-olds' ability in reading, mathematics, and science, showed New Zealand's average score was at an all-time low.[16] Nearly 30 percent of 15-year-old students did not reach the baseline performance level in maths, and around 20 percent did not in reading.[e]

### The performance of New Zealand students has not improved over time, up to 2022.

There has been no improvement in New Zealand's achievement over time. Students' reading and writing achievement has flatlined over the last decade.[17]

**Figure 3:** *Average NMSSA score for reading, writing, and maths from 2012 to 2022.*

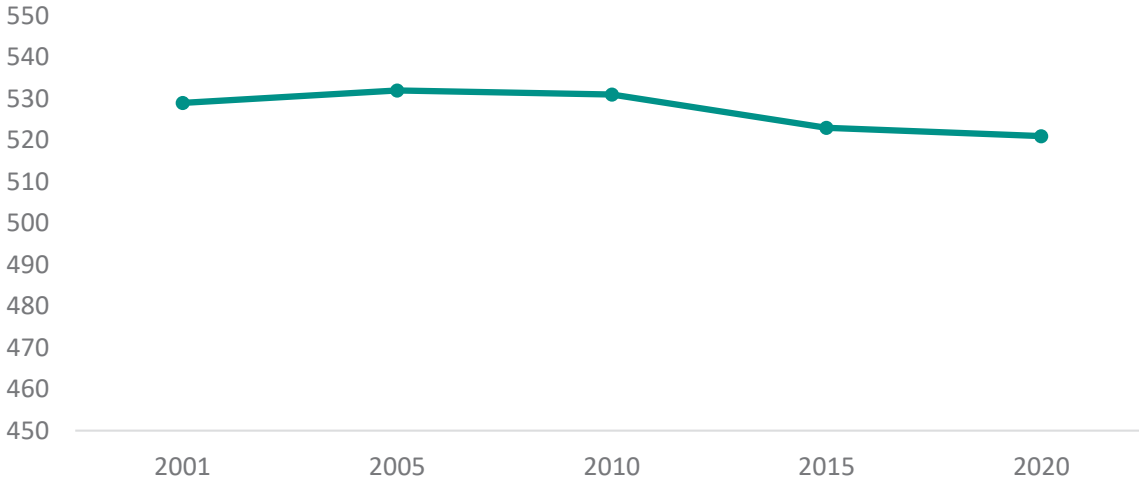



### International studies also show that up to 2020, there was no progress in literacy and numeracy for Year 5 and Year 9 students in New Zealand, and achievement among Year 11 students has declined.

New Zealand's most recent PIRLS results showed that while reading scores did not change significantly between 2015 and 2020, there has been a longer-term decline. Both the 2015 and 2020 mean scores were significantly lower than those in 2005 and 2010. Between 2016 and 2020, there was also a decrease in the proportion of students meeting the intermediate benchmark for reading proficiency.

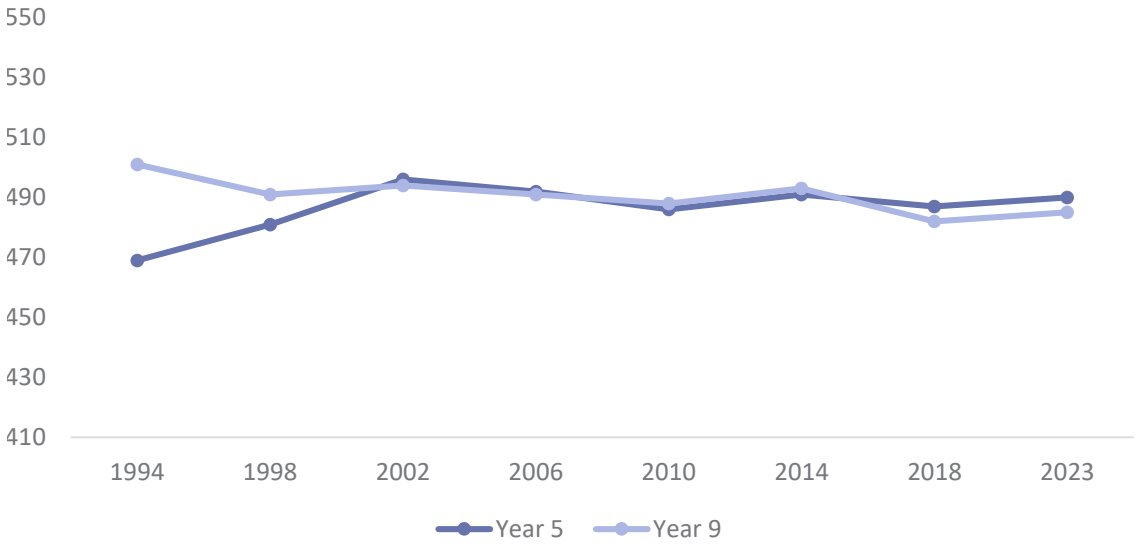
e The Programme for International Student Assessment measures 15-year-olds' ability in reading, mathematics, and science.

**Figure 4:** *Average PIRLS score for Year 5 students for reading from 2001 to 2020.*



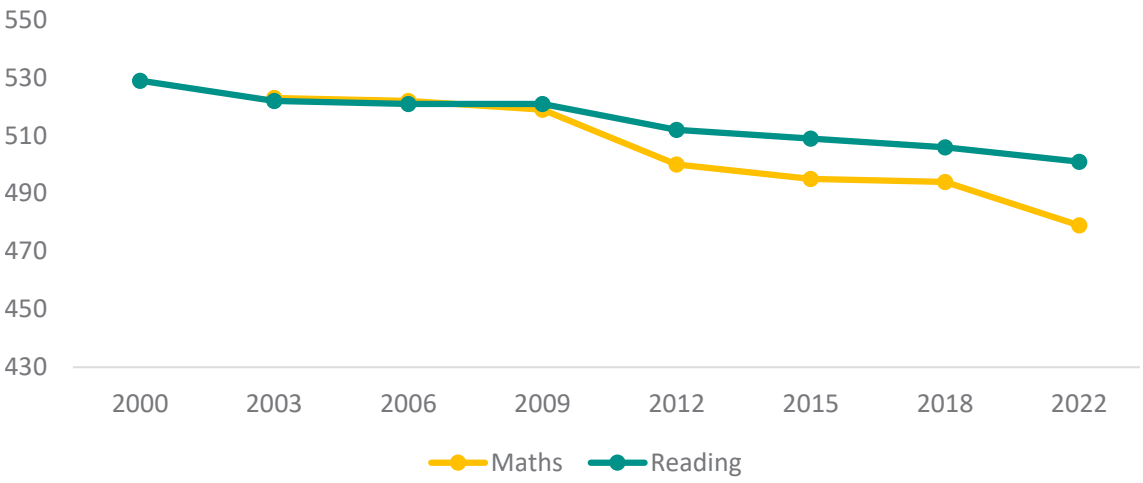

New Zealand's Year 5 and Year 9 maths results have not changed since 2002 and are still lagging behind top-performing nations like Singapore, England, Australia, and the USA.[18]

**Figure 5:** *Average TIMSS score for Year 5 students for maths from 1994 to 2023.*



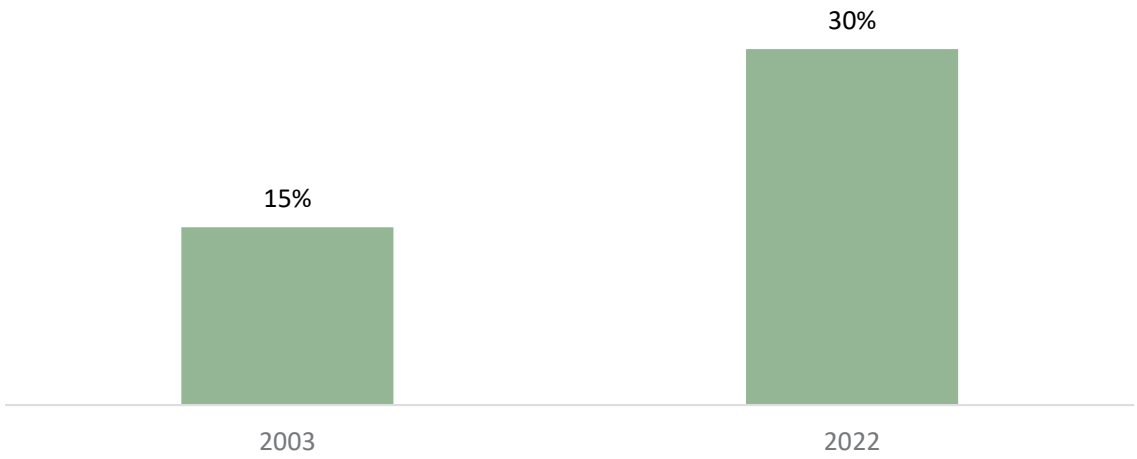

Results from 2022 show that New Zealand's average performance for 15-year-olds has been steadily declining since 2009.[19] Although New Zealand still scores above the OECD average, the drop in maths achievement between 2018 and 2022 was particularly sharp.

**Figure 6:** *Average PISA score for 15-year-olds for maths and reading from 2000 to 2022.*




This decline was largely driven by a growing number of low-performing students – 30 percent of students can now complete only basic maths tasks, compared to 15 percent in 2003.

**Figure 7:** *Proportion of students who can only complete basic maths tasks in 2003 compared to 2022 (PISA).*



# 3) Where are the biggest challenges?

## In New Zealand, we have socio-economic, gender and ethnic disparities in reading and maths achievement.

### Socio-economic

While there are high and low achievers in all schools, in New Zealand the gap in achievement between higher and lower socio-economic groups is larger than most other nations – NMSSA estimates the difference at more than two years of schooling.[20]

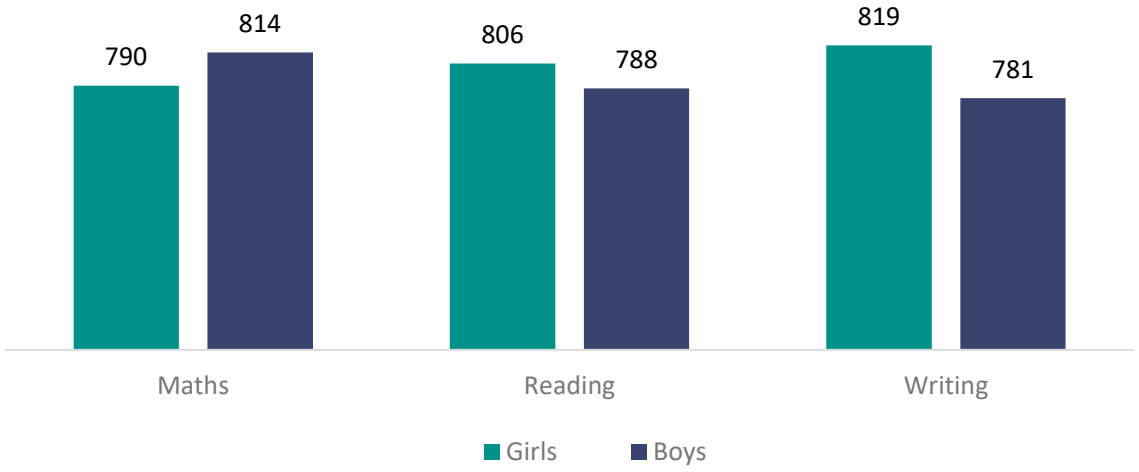
International studies show New Zealand has one of the most significant differences in achievement between economically disadvantaged students and those who are economically affluent, with the seventh biggest disparity in all countries participating in PIRLS.[21]

The wide variability in students' reading and maths achievement is an area of persistent and ongoing concern. In 2016 and 2021, variability between New Zealand's high and low achieving readers by Year 5 is larger than any other country scoring above the PIRLS centre point on reading achievement.[22] For maths, only six countries have bigger differences than New Zealand.[23]

### Gender

In both New Zealand and international studies, New Zealand girls perform better than boys for reading and writing, and boys perform better than girls in maths.

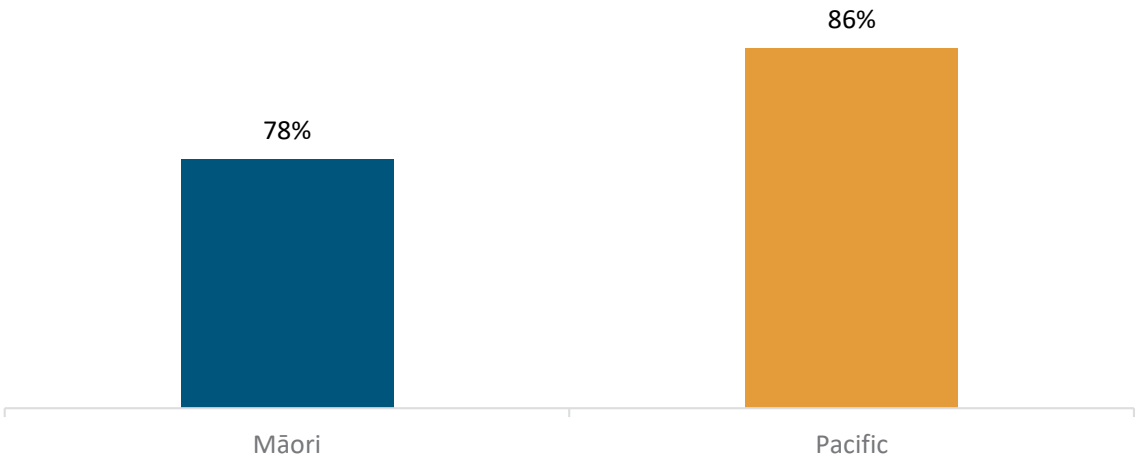
**Figure 8:** *Average CIPS score for reading, writing, and maths for Year 8 girls and boys (reading – 2023; maths and writing, 2024).*[24]



### Ethnicity

In maths and reading, Māori and Pacific students are consistently over-represented among lower achievers and under-represented among higher achievers. This figure is most concerning in maths, in which 78 percent of Māori students and 86 percent of Pacific students are more than one year below the expected level according to CIPS.

**Figure 9:** *Proportion of Māori and Pacific students who are more than one year below the expected level in maths (CIPS, 2024).*




## Conclusion

The evidence is clear that literacy and numeracy are foundational to students' success, not only in education, but across their lives. These skills underpin achievement across the curriculum and are strongly linked to future earning potential, employment, health, and wellbeing. Unfortunately, New Zealand students' achievement in English and maths is poor and has not improved. Students in lower socio-economic communities, and Māori and Pacific students are consistently over-represented among low achievers. The challenge to raise attainment in English and maths is a very large one.

In the next section, we introduce the changes being made across the curriculum to lift achievement, and outline what has changed with the new English and maths learning areas.

# **Part 2:** What are the new requirements?

The Government has made a series of changes to improve achievement across New Zealand, as part of 'Teaching the Basics Brilliantly'. The changes include refreshing the two national curriculums and the introduction of a different approach to teaching literacy and numeracy. This part outlines what these changes are, who is responsible for delivering them and the implementation support that is being provided.

This part outlines:

1) the Government's target and strategy for lifting student achievement
2) what schools are required to do:
   a) one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths
   b) refreshed curriculums
3) how English and maths have changed in the New Zealand Curriculum
4) how Te Marautanga o Aotearoa has changed.

## 1) What is the Government's target for student achievement?

**The Government has set a target to address New Zealand students' poor achievement.**

By December 2030, 80 percent of Year 8 students should be at or above the expected curriculum level for their age in reading, writing, and maths. This target recognises the key role that developing literacy and numeracy skills at primary school plays in setting children up to succeed in the broader curriculum.

Achieving this target requires a significant improvement in current achievement. As shared in Part 1, less than one in four Year 8 students are at the expected level for maths or writing, and less than half are at the expected level for reading. To lift achievement, the Government has introduced several significant changes in the 'Teaching the Basics Brilliantly' package, including introducing:

- **A knowledge-rich curriculum**, which sets out the essential knowledge and skills students should be taught as they move through their schooling.[25] This includes implementing the English (Years 0–6) and mathematics and statistics (Years 0–8) learning areas; and Te Reo Rangatira (Years 0–6) and pāngarau wāhanga ako (Years 0–8) in classrooms.

- **A new approach to teaching literacy and numeracy**. This includes introducing a requirement of one hour a day to teach reading, writing, and maths (or pānui, tuhituhi, pāngarau in Māori-medium settings) and implementing structured maths and literacy approaches to learning.[f]
- **Changes to assessment and reporting**. This includes rolling out phonics checks (or Hihira Weteoro in Māori medium provision) for Years 0–2 classrooms and twice-yearly assessment for Years 3–8 in reading, writing, and maths. Funding will be provided to develop a new assessment tool for twice yearly testing.
- **Extensive teacher development**. This includes investing $40.7 million for literacy/Te reo Matatini and $1.3 million for maths/pāngarau in 2024, to provide improved professional learning and development and support to teachers in structured literacy and maths, or Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā and Poutama Pāngarau.
- **Stronger and earlier learning support**. This includes funding for staff to provide additional targeted support in structured literacy and structured maths, and the Maths Acceleration Pilot which aims to bring 3,000 Year 7 and Year 8 students up to the expected curriculum level in maths. The Government also recently announced the 'Making It Write' action plan to boost student writing.
- **Greater use of data**. This includes getting schools to focus on the Government's priorities in their 2025 planning.[26]

In addition to these targeted actions to lift achievement, the Government has introduced several other changes to strengthen education. This includes a ban on cell phones in Term 2, 2024, and an attendance action plan which will require schools to have attendance management plans in place by Term 1, 2026. ERO will monitor compliance with both these changes.

These changes are required for all state and state-integrated schools across both Māori- and English medium pathways. Many Māori-medium settings teach Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMoA) as their curriculum. Part 9 of this report shares what is changing in Māori-medium kura and rumaki, and how that is going.

## 2) What are schools required to do?

There are many changes to what schools are required to do. ERO is reviewing the implementation and impact of many of these changes over time. This report focuses on the implementation and impact of:

a) one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths

b) the refreshed English and Te Reo Rangatira, and maths and pāngarau learning areas.

### a) One hour a day of reading, writing, and maths

All schools and kura are required to have a one hour a day programme in place, where students spend one hour a day on each of reading, writing, and maths or pānui, tuhituhi, and pāngarau.

f Structured approaches to learning involve systematically and explicitly teaching the elements of a skill, building complexity over time.

Prior to the introduction of this requirement, there was no set expectation or oversight for how much teaching time was spent on the foundational skills of reading, writing, and maths. Many teachers were likely spending a significant proportion of their time on these skills; however, it was not monitored. Schools' compliance with the one hour a day requirement is now monitored by ERO.

Teachers are expected to deliver required hours both in planned lessons as well as integrated into other learning areas. Importantly, students should get daily experiences with explicit teaching of new concepts and knowledge, as well as time to practice and revisit learning.

### Timeline of changes

The Government's changes came into effect for all schools and kura from Term 1, 2024, for students in Years 0–8. Kaupapa Māori kura run by a specified kura board were expected to begin implementation from 22 July 2024, and specialist schools were given an extended deadline until Term 1, 2025.

## b) A refreshed curriculum for English and Te Reo Rangatira, and maths and pāngarau

A curriculum sets out what students are expected to learn, and shows what knowledge and skills are valued. A national curriculum guides teaching and learning, and can provide structure and consistency, to ensure all students get the teaching and learning experiences they need to succeed. In New Zealand, we have two national curriculums for compulsory education: The New Zealand Curriculum and TMoA.

Both curriculums are being updated in line with the Government's priority to introduce a clearer, knowledge-rich curriculum. Prior to the refresh, these curriculums provided a lot of autonomy to individual schools to make decisions about what specific content they would prioritise in each learning area. This led to wide variation in the curriculum taught across schools[27], for both the *content* of what was taught and the ways it was taught.[28] The move to a curriculum that specifies core knowledge within learning areas aims to reduce this variability. Research also shows that curriculum design that is underpinned by core knowledge designed to build students' general knowledge about the world has significant positive impacts on primary school students' reading and maths achievement.[29]

Learning areas are being made available in stages. The English and Te Reo Rangatira (Years 0–6), and mathematics and statistics and pāngarau (Years 0–8) learning areas are some of the first to be introduced. The changes mark a significant shift in how foundational learning is structured and delivered.

### Timeline of changes

The refreshed curriculum is being introduced in stages across subjects and year groups. The refreshed English (Years 0–6) and maths (Years 0–8) learning areas were published in October 2024. They were compulsory to use from Term 1, 2025. From Term 1, 2025, primary schools were also encouraged to adjust their assessment and reporting to reflect how students are progressing against the new learning areas. The Government has released a plan for consistent assessment, which requires all primary schools to use standardised assessment tools twice yearly.[30] Schools have been encouraged to implement phonics checks for Year 1 students, and it is intended for these to be required from 2026.

Within TMoA, the final Te Reo Rangatira (Years 0–6) and pāngarau (Years 0–8) wāhanga ako (learning areas) have been available from Term 4, 2024 and required from the start of 2025. The Rangaranga Reo ā Tā programme was made available in Terms 3 and 4, 2024, for kura who register for PLD, and be available for all kura and schools to use from the beginning of Term 1, 2025. To support the implementation of the redesigned pāngarau wāhanga ako of TMoA, PLD has been made available nationwide from 2025.

### Who is accountable?

School Boards are responsible for ensuring the school operates in line with relevant legislation, regulations, and other requirements, including those related to the curriculum. School leaders are responsible for the day-to-day rollout of the refreshed learning areas and curriculum requirements in schools, and teachers are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the curriculum.

The Ministry is responsible for the refresh of the curriculums, introducing new requirements such as one hour a day, supporting implementation, support and resources, and taking action if schools are not complying.

ERO monitors and reports on whether schools are complying with the new teaching time requirements, and requires Boards and school managers to attest their school's compliance through a Board Assurance Statement. Curriculum delivery is also a core domain of ERO's school improvement framework, which is used to evaluate and report on school performance.

## 3) How have the English and maths learning areas changed?

This section sets out changes specific to the New Zealand Curriculum.

Key aspects of the curriculum are changing, including the introduction of an 'understand, know, do' framework, learning phases (replacing curriculum levels), and progress outcome statements for each learning phase.

## Understand, know, do

Each learning area is now structured using the understand, know, do framework and a progression model is used to structure learning in a way that sequences student knowledge and skills.

**Understand** – the deep and enduring big ideas and themes that students develop understanding of over the phases.

**Know** – the meaningful and important content, concepts, and topics at each phase that enrich students' understanding of the big ideas and themes and that students study using the practices.

**Do** – the practices (skills, strategies, and processes) that bring rigour to learning and support the development of the key competencies.

Each curriculum area now provides **a knowledge base and guidance** for teachers. This guidance is split across designing learning programmes, using assessment to inform teaching, and planning. While the previous curriculum contained some information on these areas, it was not learning area specific.

## Learning phases

The refreshed curriculum is now split into five phases of learning instead of the previous eight levels of achievement based on year levels. This shift is intended to better reflect how students grow and develop over time, and to support a more coherent and purpose-driven structure.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phase 1** | Years 0–3 |
| **Phase 2** | Years 4–6 |
| **Phase 3** | Years 7–8 |
| **Phase 4** | Years 9–10 |
| **Phase 5** | Years 11–13 |

## Progress outcomes

Each learning phase has a clear list of progress outcomes covering the big ideas (understand), content, concepts and topics (know), and practices, strategies and processes (do) that students should develop. These vary subject-to-subject. This is a shift from the previous curriculum, which contained specific achievement objectives, organised by learning area strand, for each year level.

The new learning areas contain a detailed breakdown of what teachers should be teaching and when throughout each phase, linked to the development of each component of the curriculum. It also contains key teaching considerations for each component. The previous curriculum did not include this breakdown. Teachers had flexibility to determine their teaching programmes throughout each year.

These changes provide teachers with significantly more structure and guidance on how to teach the learning areas and how to assess student progress by making learning pathways more transparent. The new curriculum is grounded in the science of learning[g] with a strong emphasis on *how* to teach, as well as *what* to teach.

## Changes to what is being taught

For English (Years 0–6) and maths (Years 0–8), there have been changes to the overarching learning strands used to structure each learning area, and the progress outcomes that students are expected to meet have become more detailed. These changes sit within the understand, know, do framework. Beneath the overarching understand, know, do structure, the learning area has specific components listed underneath each strand and each component is further broken down into specific sub-skills, which have multiple progress statements for each year of learning within a phase (including progress statements for after the first six months of schooling in Phase 1). These components build over time to create students who are fluent speakers, readers, and writers in English, and are summarised below.

**Table 1:** *Summary of the components of English in Years 0–6.*

| Strands for English 0–6 | Content: |
|---|---|
| **Oral language** | → Communicating ideas and information<br>→ Interpersonal communication<br>→ Vocabulary and grammar<br>→ Communication for learning |
| **Reading** | → Word recognition<br>→ Comprehension<br>→ Critical analysis |
| **Writing** | → Transcription skills<br>→ Composition<br>→ Writing craft<br>→ Writing processes |

g The science of learning is the study of how people learn. For more information, see Ministry of Education (2025). The Science of Learning Explained

The Mathematics and Statistics learning area is structured differently to the English learning area in that the strands of the learning area map directly to what students need to 'know' in the framework.

**Table 2:** *Summary of the 'Know' components of maths in Years 0–8.*

| Strands for maths 0–8 | Includes: |
|---|---|
| **Number** | → Number structure<br>→ Operations<br>→ Rational numbers<br>→ Financial mathematics |
| **Algebra** | → Equations and relationships<br>→ Algorithmic thinking |
| **Measurement** | → Measuring<br>→ Perimeter, area and volume |
| **Geometry** | → Shapes<br>→ Spatial reasoning<br>→ Pathways |
| **Statistics** | → Problem<br>→ Plan<br>→ Data<br>→ Analysis<br>→ Conclusion<br>→ Statistical literacy |
| **Probability** | → Probability investigations<br>→ Critical thinking in probability |

## Changes to how the curriculum is being taught

The science of learning underpins the new curriculums for both English and maths. Key features of the science of learning include taking a structured approach to teaching key skills, following a carefully designed teaching sequence and increased use of formative assessment to identify students' progress. This means that teachers introduce new skills or complexity in a staged way, once students have developed more foundational knowledge and skills. Strategies that assist teachers to do this are woven through the curriculum. More details on these strategies can be found in the technical appendix, which can be downloaded from our evidence website, www.evidence.ero.govt.nz.

## What supports and resources are in place

The Ministry of Education have developed the implementation supports hub and have made a number of supports and resources available to support implementation.[31] This includes:

- new PLD for maths and continuation of PLD for structured literacy
- the Structured Approaches to Maths page on Tāhūrangi provides teaching resources, guidance, and information about supporting structured approaches to maths, including lesson plans for students up to Phase 3
- dedicated resources to support the structured literacy approach on Tāhūrangi (the Ministry website for curriculum), including quick guides which outline how to use a structured literacy approach with a range of reading resources, and a ready to read phonics guide
- Ministry-funded maths resources (teacher and student workbooks) aligned to the new curriculum can be ordered
- leadership guides and implementation support packs available
- funding to purchase literacy resources – a minimum of $500 and up to $5,000 per school, each year, for the next four years.

The Ministry has provided guidance on:

- twice-yearly assessment for Years 3–8
- phonics checks
- reporting to parents
- accelerating progress – leadership guidance, as well as maths and literacy specific guidance.

The Ministry are providing in-person support through:

- maths curriculum days – schools may use two curriculum days (or four half days) in 2025
- recently expanded curriculum advisory service
- teacher networks.

Part 8 looks at how useful these resources have been in supporting the implementation of the English and maths learning areas.

# 4) How has Te Marautanga o Aotearoa changed?

While the changes to the NZC are intended as a refresh, the Ministry is conducting a more thorough redesign of TMoA to reflect a more indigenous curriculum that is knowledge-rich, grounded in the science of learning and informed by tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori.

## What is the place of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa in Māori-medium schooling?

Section 90 of the Education and Training Act enables the Minister of Education to provide direction on the content to be taught at state schools through issuing national curriculum statements.

Te Marautanga o Aotearoa is part of the national curriculum and available for all schools to use. In general, it is used by Kura ā Iwi and Kura Motuhake to inform and support the development of their teaching and learning programmes to reflect iwi, hapū, and rohe specific knowledge. Rumaki units within English medium schools may use Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, or the New Zealand Curriculum, or a combination of the two. Kura Kaupapa Māori use Te Marautanga o Te Aho Matua.

## Toi Mokopuna and Ngā Pou Matua

The redesign is underpinned by concepts drawn from Te Tamaiti Hei Raukura Position Paper. Toi mokopuna describes the dispositions and attributes of mokopuna in each wāhanga ako, reflecting the aspirations of whānau, hapū, and iwi. Ngā Pou Matua provide a foundation for culturally grounded learning. Together, they guide curriculum design and practice. They ensure knowledge, skills, understandings, and learning experiences are coherent, purposeful, and future focused across all phases of learning in each wāhanga ako. The four pou matua are:

- te mokopuna hei uri whakaheke – culturally confident contributors, holders and sharers of knowledge
- te mokopuna hei puna kōrero – confident communicators and evaluators of ideas
- te mokopuna hei tangata – socially and emotionally aware, ethical, and resilient individuals
- te mokopuna hei ākonga – capable, curious learners who engage creatively and critically with challenges.

## What is expected now for what is taught, and how is it different to before?

The redesigned Te Reo Rangatira wāhanga ako introduces Mata Ako, clearer teaching sequences year by year, divided into tūārere (phases of learning). These tūārere are Level 1 (Years 0–3), Level 2 (Years 4–6) and Level 3 (Years 7–8).

They give more explicit guidance to kura and rumaki around learning progressions making it clear for kaiako what to teach and when. Both Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau now feature progressions designed to prepare ākonga for NCEA, tertiary, vocational, and workforce pathways.

In terms of content, Te Reo Rangatira now includes explicit teaching of pānui, tuhituhi, and kōrero (reading, writing, and speaking). For ākonga in years 0–3, there is more of a focus on phonics-based instruction through Hihira Weteoro.

While spelling in te reo Māori is already phonetically predictable, the practice shift to more structured phonics-based instruction in Te Reo Rangatira strengthens teaching and learning through the carefully sequenced approach.

Pāngarau content is more contextualised within te ao Māori, with themes like marae life, money management and food. It emphasises number sense, algebraic thinking, and mathematical reasoning.

### Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā and Poutama Pāngarau

**Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā** is a structured literacy programme aligned to the new Te Reo Rangatira wāhanga ako. It has been developed specifically to support the work of kaiako delivering in and through te reo Māori. It draws from cognitive neuroscience, and includes an extensive set of ready to use classroom resources that contribute to the teaching of pānui, tuhituhi and kōrero (reading, writing, and speaking), as well as appropriate aromatawai (assessment) tools.

**Poutama Pāngarau** is a structured pāngarau approach aligned to the new pāngarau wāhanga ako. The approach is also informed by the science of learning and is divided into three key tūārere (levels) aligned with the new curriculum:

- Tūārere 1 (Years 0–3) – foundational mathematics concepts.
- Tūārere 2 (Years 4–6) – foundational knowledge, building on previous knowledge and introducing more complex mathematical ideas.
- Tūārere 3 (Years 7–8) – advanced concepts, preparing students for the next stage of learning.

It also includes a set of supporting resources, including guidance material for teachers, activity books, puzzles, and material resources for students.

### Hihira Weteoro

Hihira Weteoro is a Ministry-developed standardised phonics check for those teaching and learning through te reo Māori. It is made up of six aromatawai tasks, to be used after 20 weeks, 40 weeks, 55 weeks at kura, and in Year 2 at kura. It is equivalent to, but not a translation or adaptation of, the NZC-aligned Phonics Check.

## Conclusion

The Government is making significant changes to education in New Zealand in English-medium and Māori-medium settings. These changes include changes to the NZC and TMoA, better ways of teaching, and more support for teachers and schools. Teachers are now required to spend one hour each day on reading, writing, and maths, and follow the refreshed English and maths learning areas.

The key changes to the curriculums give teachers clearer guidance on what to teach and how to teach it, so students can build strong skills from an early age. The Ministry is providing a variety of guidance and support, so teachers and leaders can implement the changes.

The next section sets out the elements of the new English and maths learning areas teachers are using.

# **Part 3:** What is being taught in English and maths?

Encouragingly, nearly all schools have started teaching the new English and maths learning areas, and teachers are covering most of the curriculum content. Across year groups, we found that teachers focus more on the foundations of literacy and numeracy. In English, most schools use structured literacy in junior classes, and complexity increases in later year levels. In maths, teachers have a significant focus on number, even for older students, and it is not always progressing in complexity as expected.

In this section, we set out how much the different components of English and maths are being taught, and where there are differences for schools or students.

This part outlines:

1) what is being taught in English
2) what is being taught in maths
3) what is being taught in different schools.

## What we found: an overview

**Already, nearly all schools (98 percent) have started using the new English learning area, and nearly all teachers are covering the full range of content.**

Nearly all schools (98 percent)[h] have started using the new English learning area for students in Years 0–6. Nearly all teachers teach most components, and report that structured literacy approaches are a significant change in what they teach.

**Nearly all Years 0-3 teachers (more than 90 percent) report consistently using some type of structured literacy approach in junior classes.**

Nearly all teachers of Years 0-3 students report consistently using some type of structured literacy approach in junior classes. Just over nine in ten teachers report teaching phonics (92 percent) and decoding (91 percent) a lot.

h This data is based on the Ministry's school check-in from Terms 1 and 2, 2025.

### In English, what is taught at different year levels is what is expected – more complex components are appropriately taught more for older students.

Word recognition is taught more to students in Years 0–3 than those in Years 4–6. Older students are taught more comprehension, writing craft and critical analysis compared to younger students.

### Nearly all schools (98 percent) have started using the new maths learning area. Concerningly, so far teachers focus on number, and all other components are taught less.

Nearly all schools (98 percent)[i] have started using the new maths learning area for students in Years 0–8. However, we are seeing many teachers focus much more on teaching number, which includes skills like addition and subtraction, because it is crucial for building foundational maths skills.

### In maths, there is not yet the expected level of shift to more complex components as students get older.

Across all year levels, teachers focus on the foundational components of the maths learning area. For instance, in Years 7–8, three-quarters of teachers (75 percent) teach number 'a lot', and more than any other component of maths. Research suggests this is due to a combination of factors, including students' needs, the greater change in how numbers is taught, and teachers confidence.

### Importantly, teachers across all school types, sizes, and locations are teaching the components of the refreshed curriculum.

We found that schools in different socio-economic communities are implementing the new learning areas similarly. Teachers' use of the curriculum components does not significantly differ by rurality, EQI, or school type.

These findings and supporting evidence are set out in more detail below.

i As above.

## 1) What is being taught in English?

Part 2 sets out what the key changes are for the English learning area, including what components make up the content of the English learning area for students in Years 0–6. These components provide core skills which increase in complexity for each year level. A summary of the components for English is below.

**Table 3:** *Summary of the components of English in Years 0-6.*

| Strands for English 0–6 | Content: |
|---|---|
| **Oral language** | → Communicating ideas and information<br>→ Interpersonal communication<br>→ Vocabulary and grammar<br>→ Communication for learning |
| **Reading** | → Word recognition<br>→ Comprehension<br>→ Critical analysis |
| **Writing** | → Transcription skills<br>→ Composition<br>→ Writing craft<br>→ Writing processes |

In this section, we set out:

a) how many schools are using the refreshed curriculum for English

b) how much the components for English are taught

c) where there are differences between year levels.

### a) How many schools are using the refreshed curriculum for English?

Already, nearly all schools are using the new English learning area.

Nearly all schools (98 percent)[j] report they have started teaching the new English learning area, with an emphasis on structured literacy in junior classes. There is no pattern to which schools are more or less likely to have started.

When talking to leaders and teachers, we heard teachers are working to unpack the English learning area document, including understanding the scope and sequence of structured literacy approaches.

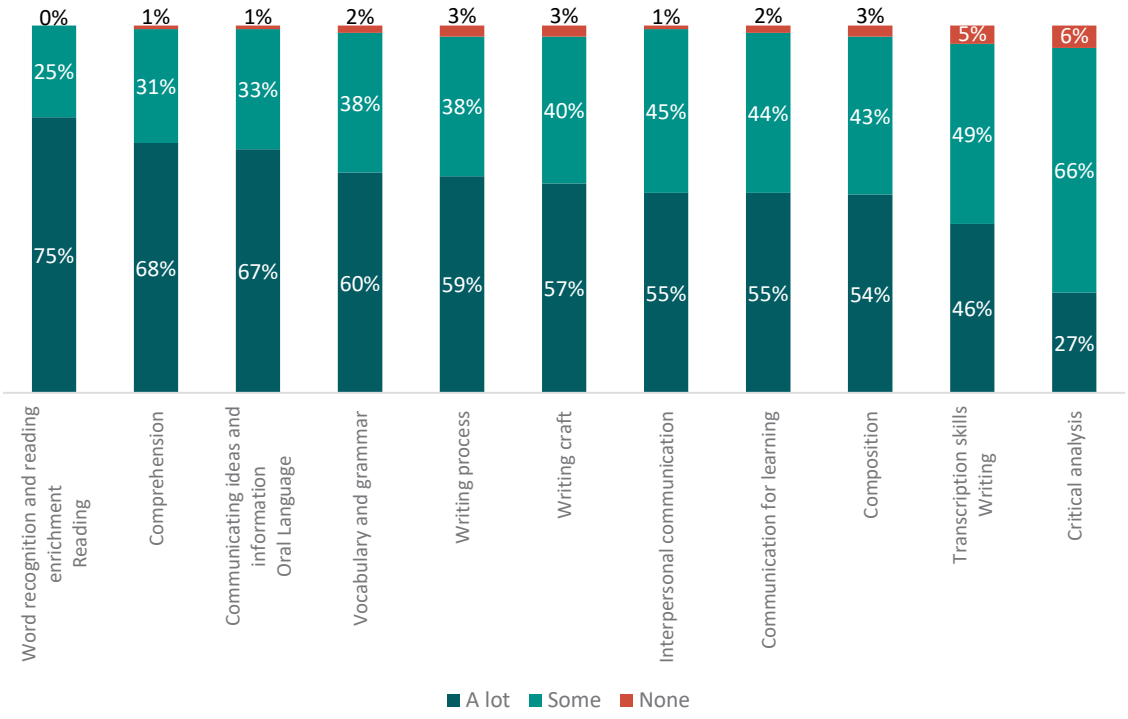
j This data is based on the Ministry's school check-in from Terms 1 and 2, 2025.

## b) How much are the components for English taught?

**More than nine out of ten teachers teach all the components. Teachers across Years 0–6 frequently teach most components of the English learning area.**

Across Years 0–6, teachers are teaching a range of components extensively. All the components are taught by more than nine out of 10 teachers.

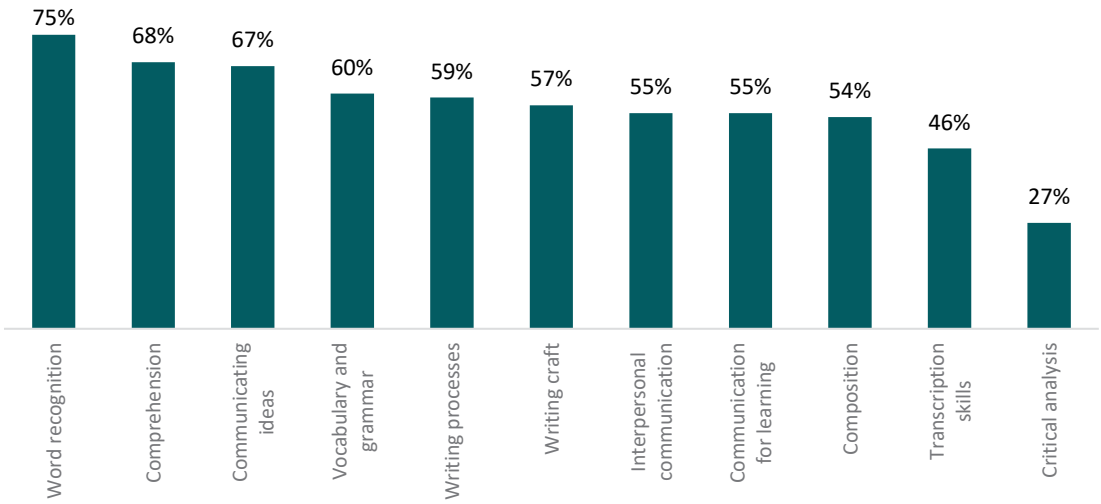
**Figure 10:** *Percentage of teachers who teach components of the revised English learning area.*




More than three-quarters of teachers (75 percent) indicate that they focus on word recognition a lot, followed closely by reading comprehension and communicating ideas and information. The components that are being taught more are those that are focused on as part of a structured literacy approach. Teachers told us these are the foundations for the rest of the English learning area. For example, students will be better at reading comprehension if they have strong word recognition.

We heard some teachers are doing more intentional integration between reading and writing, so children read about a text then write about it.

**Figure 11:** *Percentage of teachers who teach components of the revised English learning area 'a lot'.*




Only a very small number of teachers are not teaching some of the components at all, with 6 percent not teaching any critical analysis, 5 percent not teaching transcription skills and only 3 percent not teaching writing processes. The teachers who are not teaching critical analysis, transcription, or writing skills at all are almost all teaching in Years 0–3. This is to be expected, as students cannot engage in these more complex skills until they have mastered more foundational skills like word recognition or reading comprehension.

### Nearly all Years 0–3 teachers report consistently using some type of structured literacy approach.

Structured literacy approaches are an evidence-based way for students to learn to read, write, and communicate.

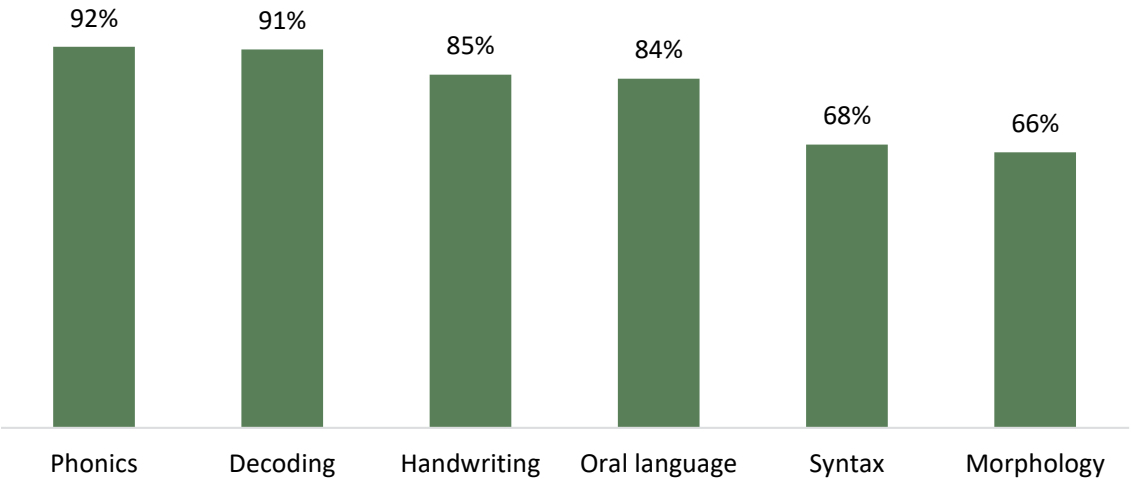
**Structured literacy approaches include:**

- Phonemic awareness
- Systematic synthetic phonics for decoding and spelling skills
- Handwriting
- Vocabulary
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Fluency
- Text structure
- Writing processes
- Comprehension

Nearly all teachers report consistently using some components of structured literacy approaches in junior classes. Just over nine in ten teachers report teaching phonics (92 percent) and decoding (91 percent) a lot, and just over four in five report teaching handwriting (85 percent) and oral language (84 percent) often. Teachers are also using syntax and morphology, though this is lower than other components, with approximately two-thirds of teachers (syntax 68 percent, morphology 66 percent) covering these often.

This reflects the focus most of the structured literacy programmes and PLD have had on phonics, coding, and decoding to support reading.

**Figure 12:** *Percentage of teachers who teach the components of structured literacy often.*




Teachers' understanding of what structured literacy approaches are and how they look across the curriculum still varies. Teachers shared that the rest of the content of the new English learning area is not a significant change to what they were previously teaching. However, the greater level of detail in the new curriculum means there is more clarity and consistency.

> "[The biggest change for me has been] having clear expectations on what students are expected to do at each level, [and] clear examples of how to teach these skills."
>
> **TEACHER**

## c) Where there are differences between year levels.

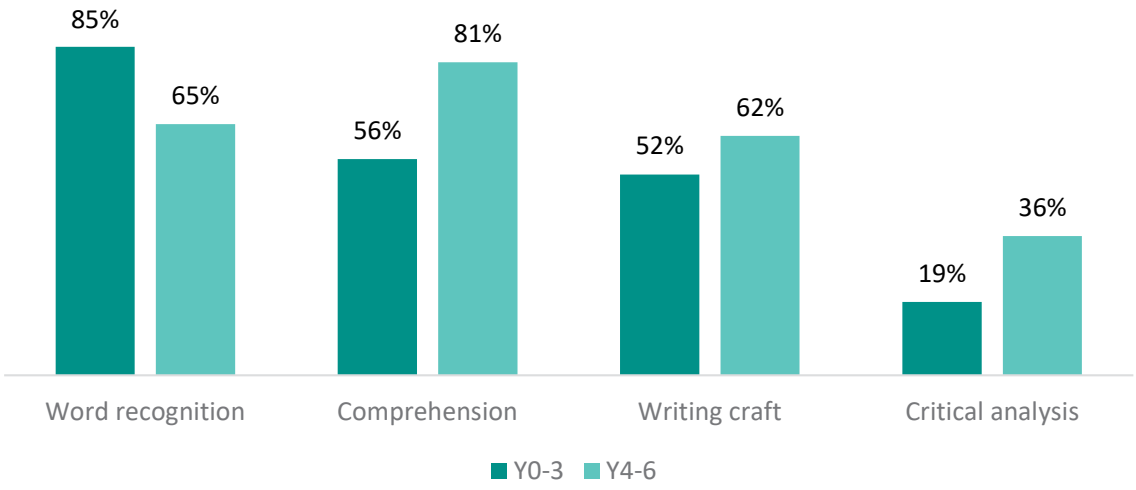
### In English, more complex components are appropriately taught more for older students.

As expected, more fundamental components of English – like word recognition – are taught more for students in Years 0–3 (85 percent of teachers of Years 0–3 students report teaching it a lot, compared to 65 percent of teachers of Years 4–6 students). Older students are taught more:

- comprehension (81 percent of teachers of Years 4–6 students teach it a lot, compared to 56 percent of teachers of Years 0–3 students)
- writing craft (62 percent of teachers for Years 4–6 teach it a lot, compared to 52 percent of teachers for Years 0–3)
- critical analysis (36 percent of teachers for Years 4–6, compared to 19 percent of teachers for Years 0–3).

Other components are taught similarly between the year levels.

**Figure 13:** *Significant differences in how much the components of English are taught 'a lot' across different year groups.*




Teachers shared that they spend more time on the foundational components of English than they did previously. Structured literacy approaches mean they do not move to more complex skills until students have the basics. Teachers told us they have a better understanding of what knowledge or skills must be in place (like fluency in reading), before they build greater complexity (like developing reading comprehension).

> "The manipulation of phonemes is a big red flag. If they really struggle with that, then we can straight away say, 'All right, let's get some phonological awareness training into these children' – in a small group, so that we can bring them up so that they're ready to head into alphabetic principles."
>
> SCHOOL LEADER

## 2) What is being taught in maths?

Part 2 sets out what the key changes are for the maths learning area, including what components make up the content of the maths learning area for students in Years 0–8. All strands are expected to be taught from Phases 1–3, with increasing complexity as students progress. The 'number' strand is foundational to all the rest of maths. A summary of the components for maths is below.

**Table 4:** *Summary of the 'Know' components of maths in Years 0–8.*

| Strands for maths 0–8 | Content |
|---|---|
| **Number** | → Number structure<br>→ Operations<br>→ Rational numbers<br>→ Financial mathematics |
| **Algebra** | → Equations and relationships<br>→ Algorithmic thinking |
| **Measurement** | → Measuring<br>→ Perimeter, area and volume |
| **Geometry** | → Shapes<br>→ Spatial reasoning<br>→ Pathways |
| **Statistics** | → Problem<br>→ Plan<br>→ Data<br>→ Analysis<br>→ Conclusion<br>→ Statistical literacy |
| **Probability** | → Probability investigations<br>→ Critical thinking in probability |

Across these strands, teachers also weave the elements of “Understand” and “Do”:

| Strands for maths 0–8 | Content |
|---|---|
| **Understand** | → Patterns and variation<br>→ Logic and reasoning<br>→ Visualisation and application |
| **Do** | → Investigating situations<br>→ Representing situations<br>→ Connecting situations<br>→ Generalising findings<br>→ Explaining and justifying findings |

In this section, we set out:

a) how many schools are using the refreshed curriculum for maths

b) how much the components for maths are taught

c) where there are differences between year levels.

## a) How many schools are using the refreshed curriculum for maths?

### Nearly all schools (98 percent) have started using the new maths learning area.

Almost all schools report that they have started using the new maths learning area for students in Years 0–8.[k] Like with English, there is no pattern to which schools have or have not started.

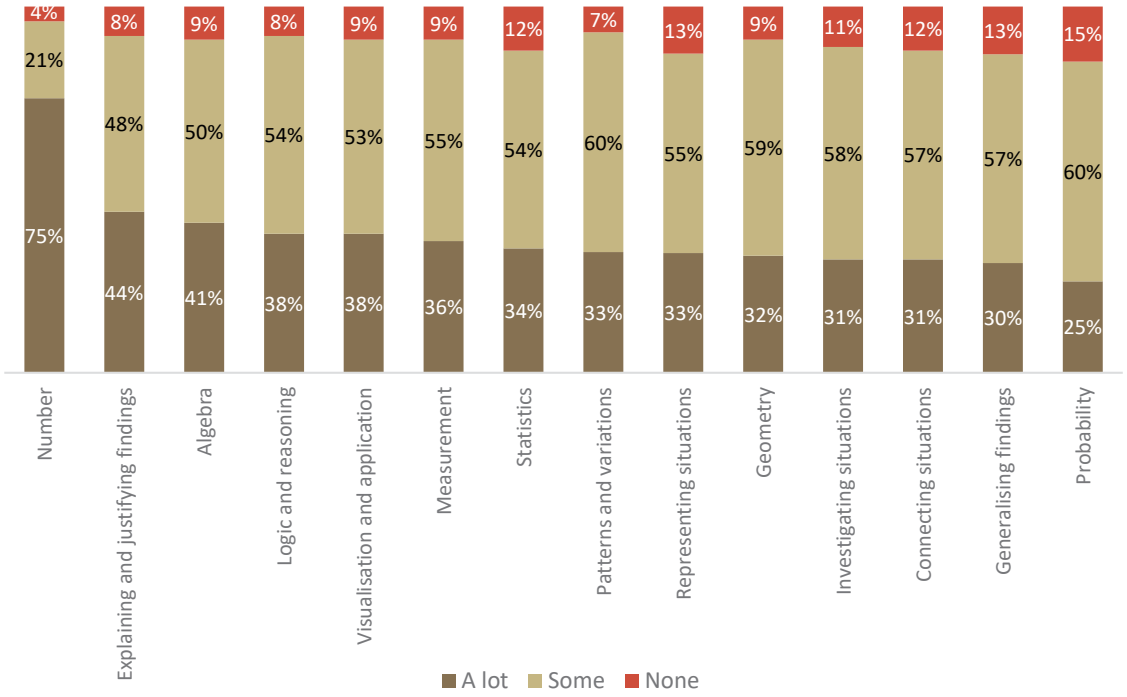
## b) How much are the components for maths taught?

### More than eight out of ten teachers teach all components of maths. Concerningly, so far, teachers focus on number, and all other components are taught less.

The components of maths are also taught extensively, with each component taught either some or a lot by more than eight out of ten teachers. We heard that teachers are thinking more about their approaches to teaching maths, and how they can weave together different topics in maths.

k This data is based on the Ministry’s school check-in from Terms 1 and 2, 2025.

**Figure 14:** *Percentage of teachers who teach components of the revised maths learning area.*




Number is the taught most, with just over three-quarters of teachers teaching number a lot (75 percent). Concerningly, there is a substantial drop-off in how much each of the other components is taught. After number, the other most commonly taught components are explaining and justifying findings (44 percent of teachers report teaching a lot) and algebra (41 percent report teaching this a lot).

More components are not taught at all for maths, compared to English. Approximately one in eight teachers report not teaching probability (15 percent), representing situations (13 percent), and generalising findings (13 percent) at all.

Teachers report the biggest change for maths has been an increased expectation for what students know and can do, across year levels. Teachers told us they have had to adjust their expectations and support older students to 'catch up' to what they are expected to be able to do in the new curriculum.

> "[The biggest change is] the changes in expectations at different year levels. Things we have not taught before at Year 3, the children are now expected to know."
>
> **TEACHER**

We heard that, across all year levels, teachers focus on the foundational components of the strands, because many students have not yet learnt the skills or knowledge needed to access the more complex ideas in maths. This is a big reason why teachers across all year levels report that they focus on teaching number, as it is the foundation for other maths skills.

The focus on number is not new. Number has been a relative weakness for Year 5 students in New Zealand over time,[32] and has been a focus for teachers in the previous maths learning area. Teachers report the practice change in what and how number is taught is greater than the change in other components in maths, so some teachers may be prioritising number. Research suggests teachers are less confident to teach complex maths content and are more comfortable teaching number, so it may also be they are more confident to start changing their practice in number. This is explored more in Part 8.

## c) Where are there differences between year levels?

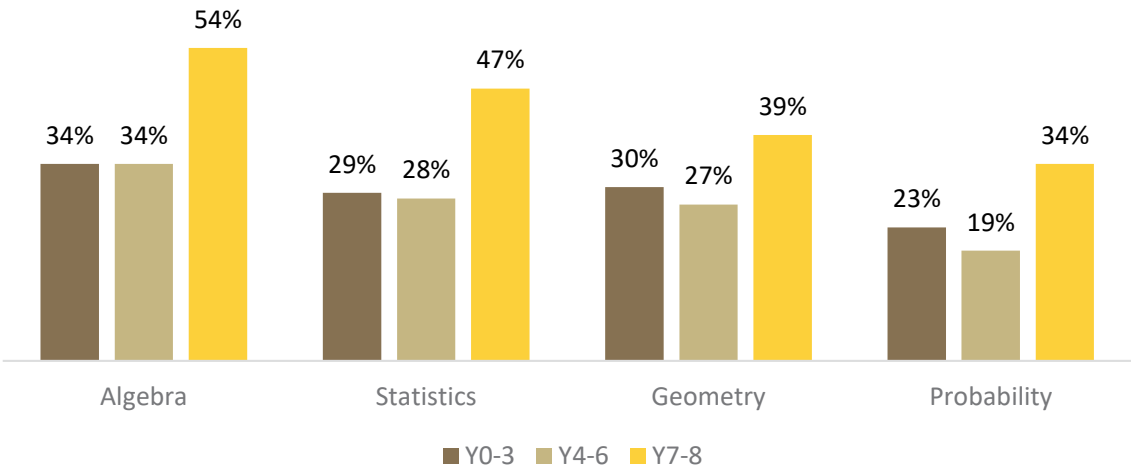
### In maths, there is not the expected shift to more complex components as students get older.

The focus on number as a foundational skill does not shift, even in more senior levels as we would expect to see. We see a continued focus on number, which includes basic operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, as well as financial mathematics and rational numbers. In Years 7–8, three quarters of teachers (75 percent) report teaching number a lot, more than any other component of maths.

While the overall focus on number does not change, students in Years 7–8 are more likely to be taught:

- algebra (54 percent of teachers for Years 7–8 students teach this a lot; 34 percent for Years 4–6; 34 percent for Years 0–3)
- statistics (47 percent of teachers for Years 7–8; 28 percent for Years 4–6; 29 percent for Years 0–3)
- geometry (39 percent of teachers for Years 7–8; 27 percent for Years 4–6; 30 percent for Years 0–3)
- probability (34 percent of teachers for Years 7–8; 19 percent for Years 4–6; 23 percent for Years 0–3).

**Figure 15:** *Significant differences in how much the components of maths are taught 'a lot' across different year groups.*




Teachers of Years 4–6 and 7–8 students told us the new curriculum expects students to progress more quickly than the previous curriculum. There is a significant gap between what is expected and what many Years 4–8 students can do because they have had several years of learning in the previous curriculum. The continued focus on number could be because teachers are trying to bridge the gap that many students face to meet higher expectations under the new curriculum.

> "The students... do not have the base of prior knowledge and skills required to competently work in Phase 3 of the new curriculum. Hopefully, this improves with time as the curriculum is rolled out across our feeding primary schools."
>
> **LEADER**

## 3) What is being taught in different schools?

### Importantly, teachers across all school types, sizes and locations are teaching the components of the refreshed curriculum.

New Zealand has historically had extensive variation in what and how students are taught, and how well they achieve. These differences are often linked to the different types, sizes, and community contexts of the schools they attend. What has been particularly notable is that, throughout this review, we have not seen some of the differences emerge that we might have expected, based on established trends. We found that most schools are using the content of the new curriculum. There are no significant differences across the oral or written language components by rurality, socio-economic community (SES) the school serves,[l] type of school[m], or proportion of Māori students.

Schools in low socio-economic communities are equally likely to teach each of the components of both English and maths as those in high socio-economic communities. We heard this is because teachers are using the structured literacy and maths programme resources to structure their teaching.

Small schools are just as likely as large schools to teach the components of the refreshed English learning area. All components are used by more than 90 percent of teachers across school sizes.[n]

We heard leaders in small schools have to prioritise and sequence curriculum changes, alongside their teaching and other responsibilities. This means that they are relying on the maths and English programmes and resources, and are less likely to have formalised their approach to planning and implementing the new learning areas.

Teachers in rural schools[o] also report that they teach the components of English and maths about as much as those in urban schools. Graphs that show this are in Appendix 3.

l ‘Low socio-economic schools’ refers to schools serving communities identified as having higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage, as indicated by the Ministry of Education’s Equity Index (EQI). The EQI replaces the former decile system and incorporates multiple factors such as parental education and income to provide a more nuanced measure of disadvantage.

m Our definitions of schools draw on the Ministry of Education’s categories. Students that are learning the new English learning area include all schools teaching Years 0–6: contributing primary schools, full primary schools, and composite schools. Students learning the new maths learning area include all schools teaching Years 0-8: contributing primary schools, full primary schools, intermediate and middle schools, composite schools, restricted composite schools, and secondary schools with Year 7–8 students.

n Small schools includes primary schools that have 100 or fewer students enrolled and secondary schools that have 400 or fewer students enrolled; Medium schools includes primary schools that have between 101 and 300 students enrolled, and secondary schools that have between 401 and 800 students enrolled; Large schools includes primary schools that have more than 300 students enrolled, and secondary schools that have more than 800 students enrolled.

o Urban is defined as schools in large, major, medium and small urban areas. Rural schools are in rural settlements and rural other.

### Teachers in schools with higher proportions of Māori students are more likely to teach word recognition.

More than eight in ten teachers (84 percent) in schools with a high proportion of Māori students[p] report teaching word recognition a lot, compared to just over seven in ten teachers (72 percent) in schools with lower proportion of Māori students. We heard from leaders and teachers that the emphasis on word recognition as a foundation skill is important for building reading frequency and giving students the confidence to read independently. Teachers told us that they find that additional focus on words that do not follow phonetic rules is particularly helpful for multilingual students. We saw teachers create connection to students' home language and culture by comparing phonetic rules between languages. For example, we observed a Year 1–2 teacher helping students understand the different sounds represented by the letters 'wh' in both English and te reo Māori.

## Conclusion

Encouragingly, nearly all schools have already started using the new English and maths learning areas and are teaching all components of English and maths. Teachers teach the components of English, including structured literacy, more than the components of maths, as many teachers are prioritising embedding the new English learning area. Teachers report that one of the biggest changes under the new curriculum is the higher expectations of students at each level, compared to the previous curriculum. This difference in expectations has challenged the way schools structure their year level groupings. Not only has the content under the new curriculum changed but so has the prescribed way the content is taught. In the next section, we cover how students are being taught in the classroom.

p We have described schools as having a high Māori roll if a quarter or more of their roll is made up of students that identify as Māori.

# **Part 4:** How are English and maths being taught?

The new English and maths learning areas draw on the science of learning to provide teachers with evidence-based specific teaching strategies that lift student achievement. We looked at the changes teachers have made to the way they teach English and maths and found that most teachers are using a broad range of these proven strategies in their classrooms.

In this part, we set out the different specific teaching strategies teachers use, and whether differences exist for maths and English across types of schools.

This part outlines:

1) what strategies teachers use to teach English and maths
2) how are teachers making use of structured literacy approaches
3) how English and maths are taught in different schools.

## What we found: an overview

**Most teachers have quickly changed how they teach English (88 percent) and maths (85 percent), using the range of evidence-backed teaching strategies that are part of the curriculum changes.**

Just under nine in ten teachers have changed how they teach English and maths. They make significant use of strategies linked to the science of learning.

**Across both English and maths, teachers of younger students (Years 0–3) use the science of learning strategies more.**

Teachers of Years 0–3 students are more likely to use repeated exposure, immediate feedback and consolidating learning in their teaching, compared to teachers of older students.

**Almost two-thirds of teachers (64 percent) report that structured literacy approaches have already changed their teaching practices a lot.**

Just under two-thirds of teachers (64 percent) report that the components of structured literacy approaches are a significant change in what they teach. Others had already started using structured literacy approaches before the curriculum change required it.

**Changes in teaching practice are happening consistently. Teachers across a range of different schools (type, size, rurality, etc.) report they are using the same techniques from the new curriculum to teach English and maths.**

There is widespread consistency in schools implementing the new curriculum. We found no significant variation between schools of different types, sizes, and community contexts in the strategies of the science of learning that teachers are using.

These findings and supporting evidence are set out in more detail below.

## 1) What strategies do teachers use to teach English and maths?

Part 2 sets out the expectation for teachers to use evidence-based strategies as they teach English and maths. These strategies help students engage with and embed new learning. The strategies are:

| Strategy |
| --- |
| → Explain and model new learning |
| → Foster engagement |
| → Reduce or increase support |
| → Immediate feedback |
| → Consolidate learning |
| → Repeat exposure |

This section shares:

a) how many teachers have changed how they teach

b) how much teachers use strategies of the science of learning

c) where there are differences between year levels.

## a) How many teachers have changed how they teach?

### Most teachers have changed how they teach English and maths.

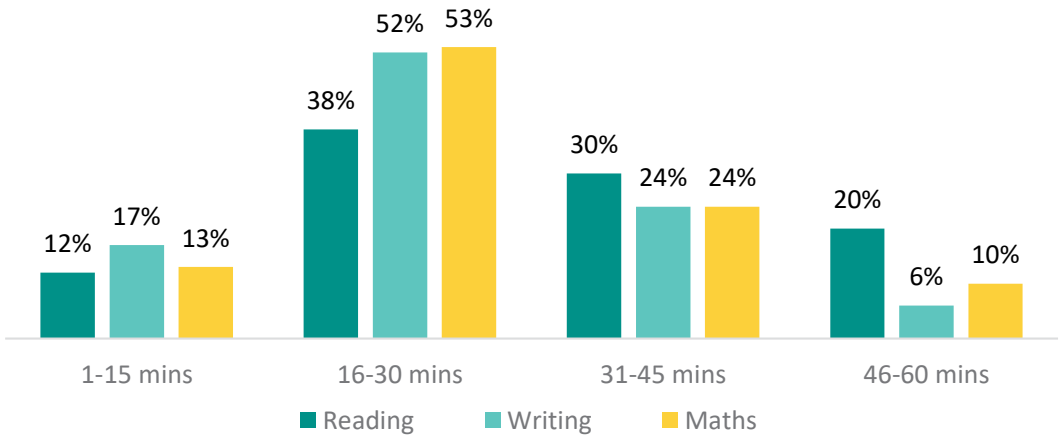
In Term 2, 2025, we found that just under nine in ten teachers have changed how they teach (88 percent for English; 85 percent for maths).

**Figure 16:** *Proportion of teachers who report a change in teaching practice for English and maths.*


Teachers and leaders report a significant change is their increased focus on explicit teaching. Half of teachers spend more than 30 minutes on explicit instruction for reading each day. Just under a third of teachers (31 percent) spend more than 30 minutes on explicit instruction for writing, and just over a third of teachers (34 percent) do this for maths.

All teachers are spending at least some time on explicit instruction across reading, writing, and maths.

**Figure 17:** *Percentage of teachers who spend different amounts of time on explicit instruction for reading, writing, and maths each day.*



Teachers report that the scope and sequence of structured literacy approaches and explicit teaching of language and grammar rules have been the biggest change in their English teaching practice. We saw teachers confidently use a mix of explicit and direct instruction with the whole class or small groups, and set students to work independently. In a few classes, teachers shared the challenges of teaching in this way when they have a wide range of abilities or year levels in their class, but when teachers did this well, we saw students engaged in the lessons and activities.

> "Instead of differentiating content, we are differentiating support."
>
> **LEADER**

We heard that the use of explicit teaching of maths was also a big change for teachers. We saw teachers working with both the whole class and groups to teach mathematical language, rules, decoding, solving word problems, and deciding which operation to use and why.

> "The biggest change has been focusing more on progress outcomes and making learning meaningful... In maths, I am encouraging them to explain their thinking instead of just finding the answer. It's more about depth than coverage now."
>
> **TEACHER**

## b) How much do teachers use the strategies of the science of learning?

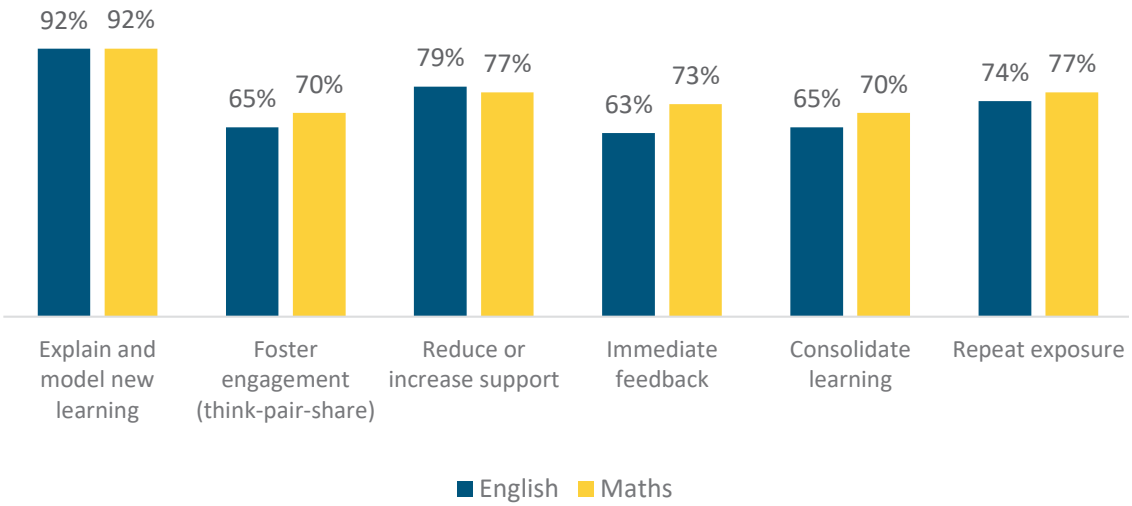
### Most teachers use the range of evidence–backed teaching strategies that are part of the curriculum changes.

Encouragingly, across both English and maths, teachers use strategies from the science of learning widely. All components are used at least sometimes, by nearly all teachers (more than 97 percent). The most used strategies are listed below.

- Just over nine in ten teachers explain and model new learning a lot (92 percent) in both English and maths
- Just under four in five teachers reduce or increase support in response to student needs in English (79 percent) and maths (77 percent)
- Approximately three-quarters of teachers repeat exposure to new learning in English (74 percent) and maths (77 percent).

Other strategies are also well used, with approximately seven in ten teachers frequently fostering engagement (70 percent), consolidating students' learning (70 percent), and providing immediate feedback (73 percent) in maths. Just under two-thirds of teachers are using these strategies in English (65 percent for fostering engagement and consolidating students' learning, 63 percent for providing feedback immediately).

**Figure 18:** *Proportion of teachers who report using the strategies a lot for teaching English and maths.*




We observed teachers modelling problem-solving and prompting students through the steps. Students responded positively to the new strategies. They like it when teachers are good at explaining, as it makes sense and makes it easier to understand. Some students shared they would appreciate other ways to have the new learning explained and modelled to them, especially when the teachers' explanation is long. Most students report they find their lessons in English and maths interesting (see Part 5 for details).

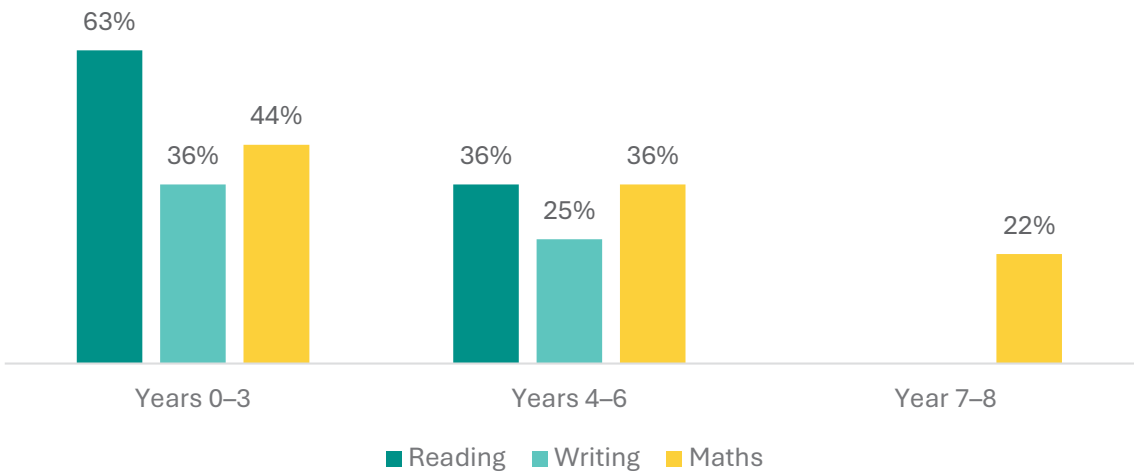
> "I like the [movable] resources for maths and visuals on the board. There has been more visuals and worksheets [since the new maths resources started being used]."
>
> **STUDENT**

## c) Where are there differences between year levels?

### Across both English and maths, teachers of younger students (Years 0–3) use the science of learning strategies more.

As expected, teachers of younger students are doing more explicit teaching than those of older students. Nearly twice as many teachers report doing more than 30 minutes of explicit reading instruction for younger students (63 percent) as they do for older students (36 percent).

**Figure 19:** *Proportion of teachers who spend more than 30 minutes on explicit teaching for reading, writing, and maths each day, across year groups.*



Teachers of Years 0–3 students are more likely to use repeated exposure, immediate feedback, and consolidating learning in their teaching, compared to teachers of older students.

**Figure 20:** *Significant differences in how much the strategies for English are used 'a lot' across different year groups.*

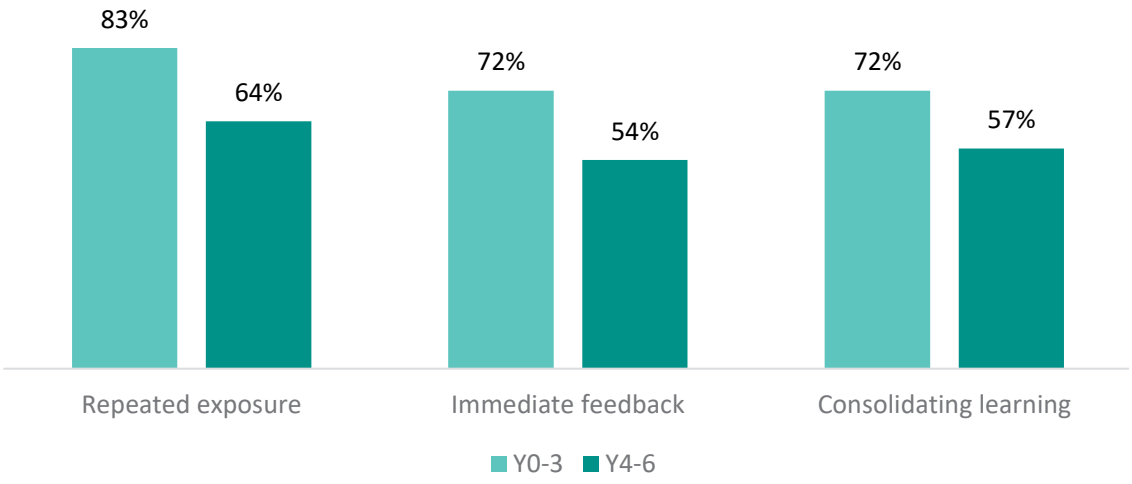
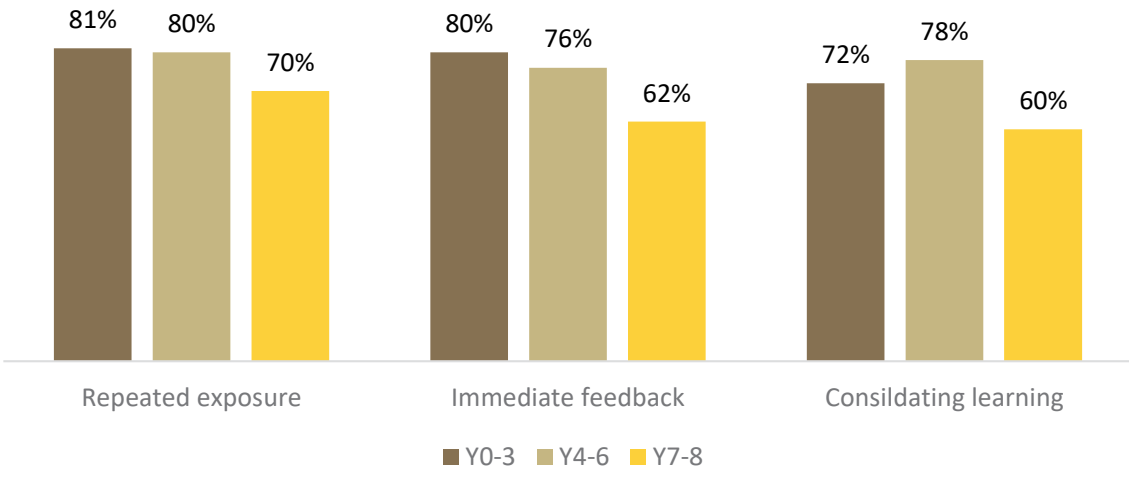



**Figure 21:** *Significant differences in how much the strategies for maths are used 'a lot' across different year groups.*



Teachers told us that younger students need more explaining and modelling to develop a strong foundation for more complex concepts as they get older. We observed teachers in Years 0–2 classes explaining and modelling new learning to the whole class, and reinforcing the learning in small groups, to build foundational skills for maths and English.

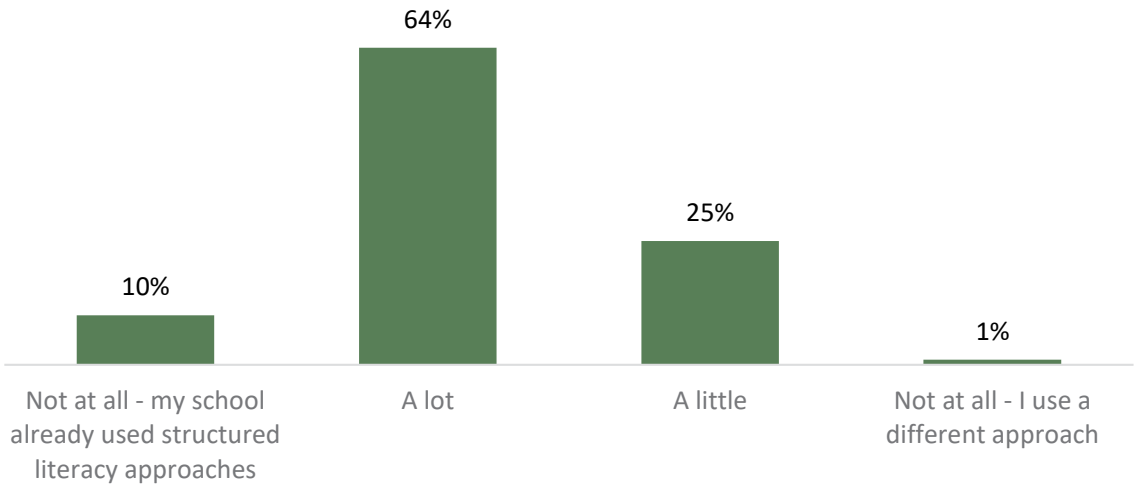
> "I am making sure that I am being more explicit with my instructions. I am also making sure that we are moving through things quicker than I previously would have due to the fact there is a lot to cover in the new curriculums."
>
> **TEACHER**

## 2) How are teachers making use of structured literacy approaches?

**Almost two-thirds of teachers (64 percent) report that structured literacy approaches have already changed their teaching practices a lot.**

Just under two-thirds of teachers (64 percent) report that structured literacy approaches are a significant change to their teaching. Others had already started using structured literacy approaches before the curriculum change required it.

**Figure 22:** *How much teachers report that structured literacy approaches have changed their teaching practice.*



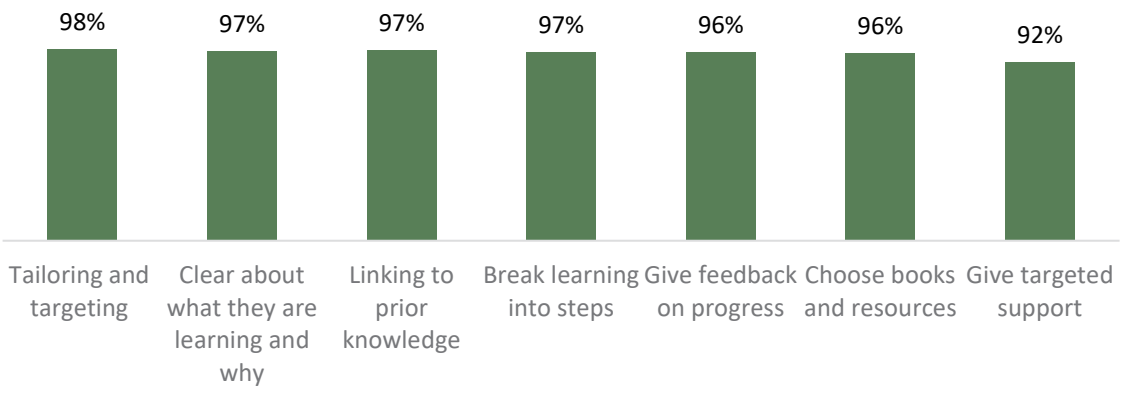
### Nearly all teachers of Years 0–3 students report using strategies for explicit teaching often.

Explicit teaching is a core component of a structured literacy approach. Nearly all teachers told us that they are using explicit teaching strategies often with their Years 0–3 students.

The strategies for explicit teaching for structured literacy that we asked about are:

| Strategy |
| --- |
| → Tailoring and targeting learning for different levels |
| → Making it clear to students what they are learning and why |
| → Linking to prior knowledge |
| → Breaking new learning into steps |
| → Giving feedback on progress |
| → Choosing books and resources to teach specific skills |
| → Giving targeted support for those needing additional help |

**Figure 23:** *Percentage of Year 0–3 teachers using structured literacy strategies often.*




We heard from teachers that structured literacy approaches require a mindset shift. This shift can be a challenge; however, we also heard that it is rewarding for teachers to see their shift in mindset make a positive impact on the learning and progress of their students.

> "My own learning around... explicit instruction and the science of learning made the biggest impact for me."
>
> **TEACHER**

## 3) How are English and maths taught in different schools?

**Changes in teaching practice are happening consistently. Teachers across a range of different schools (type, size, rurality, etc.) report they are using the same techniques from the new curriculum to teach English and maths.**

There is widespread consistency in schools implementing the new curriculum. We found no significant variation between schools of different types, sizes and community contexts in the strategies of the science of learning that teachers are using. Graphs that show this are in Appendix 3.

## Conclusion

Leaders and teachers have made a strong start in using evidence-based strategies from the science of learning regularly, for both maths and English. Almost all teachers use all the strategies at least sometimes, and report that explicit teaching has become a much stronger focus. It is promising that teachers across school types, sizes, locations, and socio-economic communities are all using the strategies. Part 8 explores why this set of changes have been so successful.

As expected, teachers of younger students have a stronger focus on explicit teaching, especially repeating exposure, consolidating learning, and providing immediate feedback. These teaching strategies help build strong foundations for students' learning.

The next part sets out what we know about the early impacts of the changes on students' learning and engagement.

# **Part 5:** What has been the change in student outcomes?

The refreshed curriculum was introduced to improve student achievement in crucial subjects. It is the first year of schools implementing the new curriculum, so it is still early to see impacts on student outcomes. We wanted to understand how students are progressing and engaging in English and maths under the new curriculum. We found early evidence of positive shifts in student achievement and student engagement for both English and maths. In this section, we set out what changes teachers and students have noticed in achievement and engagement.

This part outlines:

1) how students are achieving and progressing in English and maths
2) how engaged students are in English and maths
3) where there are differences in achievement and engagement.

## What we found: an overview

**It is still early days, but there are positive signs that students' achievement in English and maths is improving.**

Early indicators from phonics checks show a significant improvement in student achievement. Just over half of teachers, across year levels, report improved achievement in English (54 percent) and in maths (51 percent), compared to last year. Parents and students also report seeing improved achievement in both English and maths.

**Three out of four teachers of Years 0-3 students (75 percent) report that structured literacy approaches have already improved literacy for most students.**

Nearly all teachers report that structured literacy approaches have improved at least some students' literacy, and three out of four teachers (75 percent) report improved literacy for most students. Nearly one-third (30 percent) of teachers report that students' literacy has improved more than they expected.

**Student engagement in English has improved, and in maths, it has improved more. About nine out of ten students now enjoy learning in English and maths.**

Almost half (47 percent) of teachers report improved student engagement in English, and just under three in five (56 percent) teachers report improved student engagement in maths, compared to last year. Most students also report finding their lessons in English and maths interesting, showing high levels of engagement.

**Teachers are most likely to report improvements in maths achievement for Years 7–8 students, and improved engagement in both English and maths for younger students.**

Just under three in five teachers report improvements in maths achievement for Years 7–8 students (57 percent), compared to just over a half of teachers for Years 4–6 students (52 percent), and just over two in five teachers of Years 0–3 students (43 percent). Younger students are more likely to show improved engagement in learning (53 percent of teachers of Years 0–3 report engagement has improved for English), compared to older students (41 percent of teachers of Years 4–6).

These findings and supporting evidence are set out in more detail below.

## 1) How are students achieving and progressing in English and maths?

This section shares the early impacts on students' achievement in English and maths from:

a) assessments

b) teachers

c) parents

d) students.

### a) Assessments

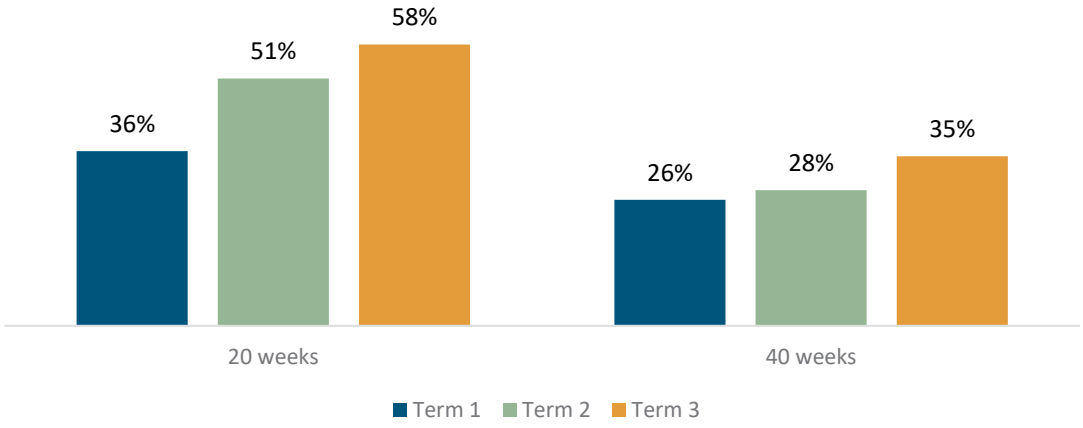
**Phonics checks[q] show a significant improvement in student achievement after 20 weeks instruction.**

Phonics checks are available for teachers to use with their students after 20 weeks' instruction, and after 40 weeks. Because students start school at different times, the tests occur throughout the year. In Term 1, 2025, one in three students (36 percent) achieved at or above the curriculum expectation after 20 weeks of school. In Term 2, over half of students (51 percent) achieved at or above, and in Term 3, this number rose even further (58 percent). The biggest increase was in the proportion of students exceeding curriculum expectations, which more than doubled from Term 1 to Term 3 (from 20 percent to 43 percent).

q Phonics check data is collected by the Ministry of Education, and phonics reporting is non-compulsory.

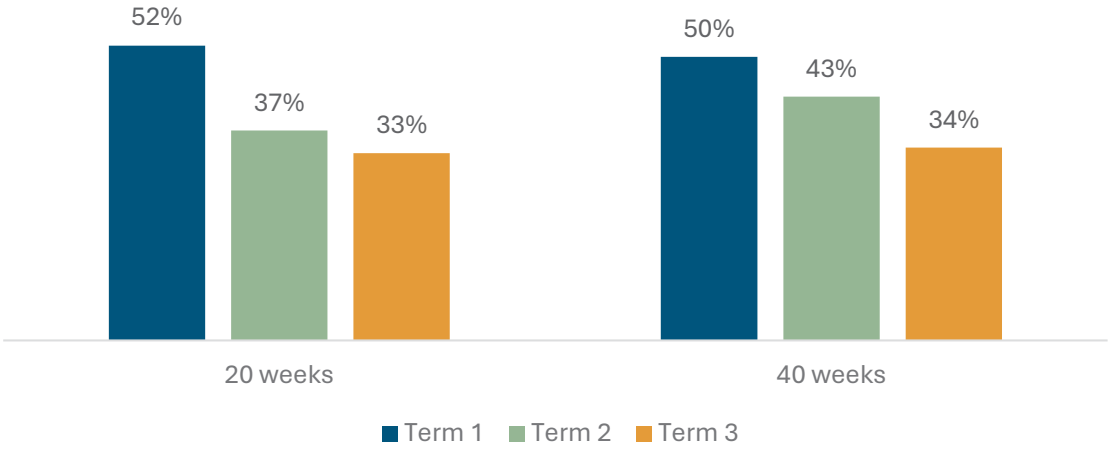
The number of children achieving at or above the curriculum expectation after 40 weeks instruction also improved (from 26 percent to 35 percent).[r] Students have not yet had 40 weeks' instruction in the new curriculum, which may be why they are not yet achieving at the same level as students who have had 20 weeks' instruction.

**Figure 24:** *Proportion of students at or above the curriculum expectation in phonics checks, after 20 weeks' instruction and after 40 weeks' instruction*




Encouragingly, we are also seeing a decline in the proportion of students who need support. Between Term 1 and Term 3, the proportion of students assessed as needing support in both the 20 and 40 week checks decreased from half of students to just a third of students.

**Figure 25:** *Proportion of students who phonics checks identify as 'needing support' during phonics checks, after 20 weeks' and 40 weeks' instruction*




r From data reported to the Ministry of Education, Terms 1, 2, and 3 2025.

The improvements from Term 1 to Term 3 suggest that the greater time students have learning in the new curriculum, and the greater *proportion* of their learning that is in the new curriculum, the better they achieve.

The data also shows that recent curriculum changes are having a positive impact for all students.[s] Students of different ethnicities (Māori, Pacific, European, and Asian) have all made progress (Figure 27). Students in low, moderate, and high socio-economic communities have also all made progress (Figure 28).

**Figure 26:** *Proportion of students at or above the curriculum expectation in phonics checks after 20 weeks' instruction by ethnicity*

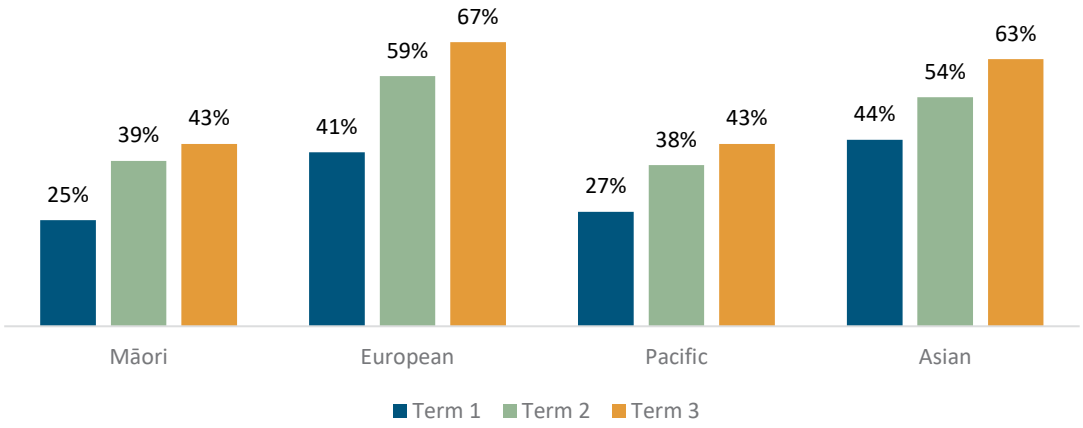
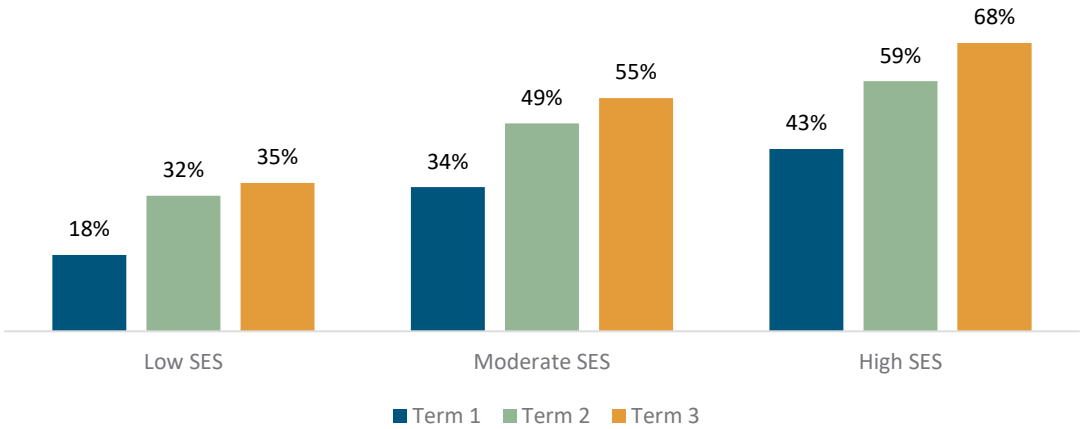



**Figure 27:** *Proportion of students at or above the curriculum expectation in phonics checks after 20 weeks' instruction, by socio-economic status (SES) of the school community*




s We use data from the 20 weeks cohort for illustrating demographics trends, as students in the 40 weeks cohort began their schooling prior to the recent curriculum changes.

### Students show accelerated progress when their teachers participate in structured literacy PLD.

Around one in four (25 percent) students showed greater progress than their peers in reading assessments, as their teachers increase their knowledge of structured literacy approaches through PLD. Over the same length of time, four out of five students (80 percent) improved in a Correct Letter Sounds test, and nearly three quarters of students (72 percent) improved in a Word Recognition Test.[t] This shows the PLD for teachers is effective, and that changes in what and how students are taught are likely to improve student outcomes.

## b) Teachers

### It is still early days, but there are positive signs that students' achievement in English and maths is improving. Just over half of teachers report improvements in student achievement (54 percent for English, 51 percent for maths).

Teachers told us that they are seeing early shifts in student achievement. Just over half of teachers across year levels report improvements in student achievement in English (54 percent report either a big or some improvement) compared to last year. For maths, there is a similar story, with just over half of teachers reporting improved achievement in maths (51 percent).

**Figure 28:** *Proportion of teachers who report improvements in student achievement for English and maths across year levels*


Teachers are positive about the English and maths programmes' structure, and how it makes it easier to identify what students know. Teachers are finding that the new English learning area is helpful, clear, and easy to understand. Teachers told us they like the new maths learning area because it gives more consistency across schools and classrooms. This structure helps teachers to track student progress and identify gaps between what students currently know and what the curriculum expects them to know. Teachers are working to identify and fill these gaps in learning, particularly for older students, so students can continue to progress through the curriculum.

t These tests are part of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment which consists of a set of measures for assessing reading skills. For more information, see https://newzealandcurriculum.tahurangi.education.govt.nz/dibels-assessment-supporting-videos/5637254826.p.

> "I really enjoy the way the new curriculum has been structured. It is very informative and clear."
>
> **TEACHER**

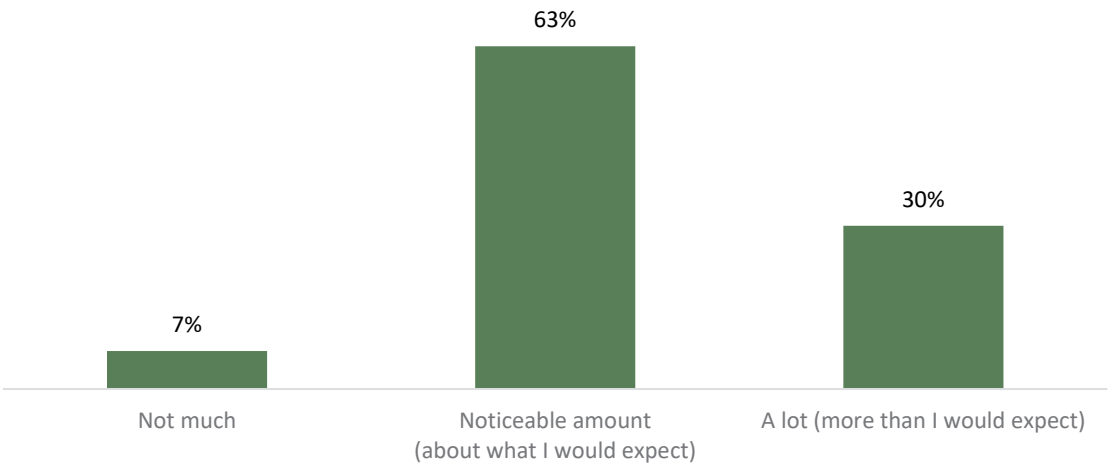
While teachers are positive about students' progress, many remain cautious. School leaders tell us that they will better understand the impacts of the curriculum on student progress after a full school cycle.

### Three out of four teachers of Year 0-3 students report that structured literacy approaches have already improved literacy for most students.

Nearly all (98 percent) teachers of Years 0-3 students report that structured literacy approaches have improved at least some students' literacy. Three-quarters of teachers (75 percent) say structured literacy approaches have improved literacy for most students.

Nearly one-third of teachers (31 percent) report that structured literacy approaches improved students' literacy more than they expected.

**Figure 29:** *Percentage of teachers of Years 0–3 students who report how much student achievement has improved with structured literacy approaches*




While most teachers we talked to were enthusiastic about trying structured literacy approaches because of the evidence behind them, we heard many were surprised by how much progress students made. Some teachers who had initially been reluctant were encouraged by the outcomes they saw.

> "Initially I found it a bit boring... Once I wrapped my head around it, then I was convinced by the data we were getting [on] the kids' progress. I got excited. And now that I'm comfortable in teaching it, it's not boring at all — it's actually quite fun."
>
> **TEACHER**

Some parents told us that the structured literacy approaches used by the teacher has helped their child 'catch up' with their peers. Parents and whānau who have older children who experienced the previous curriculum can see the benefits of the new approach.

> "Structured literacy has been incredibly successful for my child in Year 2. Especially when I compared to my child in Year 4, who didn't follow structured literacy. Much quicker progress, reading fluency, and better spelling."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

## c) Parents

### Parents and whānau are noticing positive results following curriculum changes.

Parents and whānau told us about the progress their children are making after one hour a day in reading, writing, and maths was implemented. Just over three-quarters of parents report their child's progress has improved in English (77 percent), and maths (76 percent) since one hour a day was implemented. Parents and whānau are positive about how their children are being taught.

> "The school has one more hour focusing on reading and writing, focusing on the area of my child's weakness and trying to improve it. I have seen so many improvements in my child."
>
> **PARENT**

## d) Students

### Students report they are making progress in English and maths.

Similar to parents, approximately three-quarters of students say they are getting better at English (77 percent) and maths (75 percent).

**Figure 30:** *Percentage of students[u] who report they are getting better at English and maths*


Students, particularly those in Years 7–8, enjoy being able to see their progress and find it easier to ask for help in the classroom when needed. We heard students feel they are improving when they can complete more challenging work with ease.

> "My reading is getting better... taking time to look at the words. I am reading faster than usual. My fluency has increased."
>
> **STUDENT**

> "It is good [to] see your own progress at the beginning and end of the term... It is more organised this year... Maths is the focus at school this year... There is better whole class explanation this year, more set out and easier to learn."
>
> **STUDENT**

## 2) How engaged are students in learning English and maths?

This section describes how engaged students are in their learning, from:

a) students

b) teachers.

u We surveyed students from Years 4–6 for English, and Years 4–8 for maths.

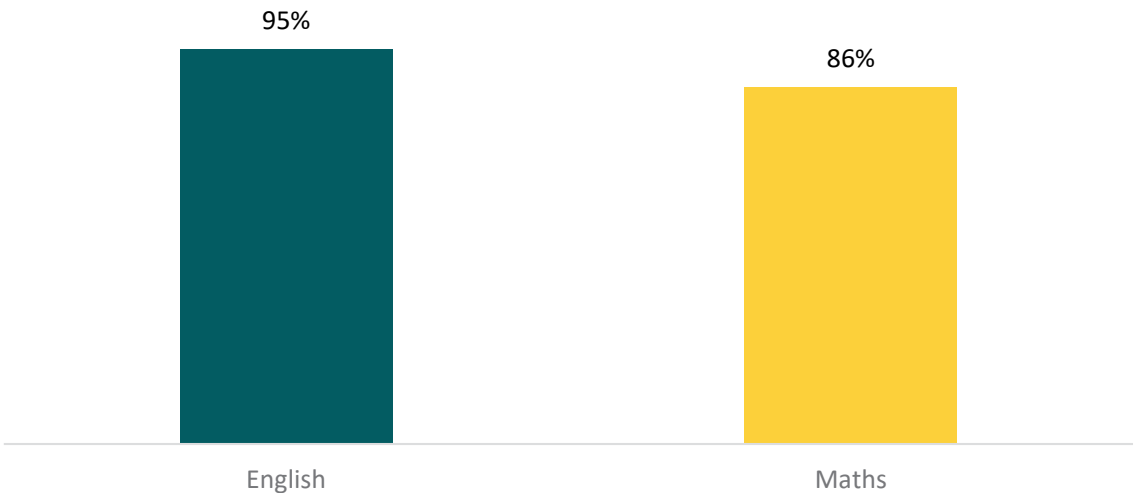
## a) Students

### Student engagement in English has improved, and in maths, it has improved more. About nine out of ten students now enjoy learning in English and maths.

Student engagement refers to how involved and receptive students are to the learning that is taking place. Learning is not a passive activity – it is a reciprocal activity between student and teacher. Students can choose to withhold their attention and participation in learning if they feel that it is a pointless activity. This behaviour commonly occurs when students cannot see the connection between the learning and a real-world application for this learning, or if the learning sits outside of their zone of capability and they predict that they will fail in any task associated with the learning.[33] When students are disengaged in this way, we see very little progress shift. Research indicates that students who are engaged in learning are more likely to be successful.[34] Therefore, it is essential that any teaching and learning strategies consider student engagement.

Almost all students find their learning in English is interesting (95 percent report it is either very or a little interesting). Just under nine in ten students report finding their learning in maths interesting (86 percent). Interest in school and engagement in learning is an important indicator for long-term educational outcomes.

**Figure 31:** *Percentage of students who report they find what they are learning interesting.*




We observed students engaged and enjoying the reading, writing, and maths activities they are doing in their classes. The pace and variation in tasks keeps the learning interesting for students with opportunities to contribute individually, in pairs, and in small groups. We saw that repeated practice of new learning in different ways reinforces the foundational knowledge and skills in a fun and engaging way.

> "[I am focused on] ensuring that I am delivering to my students in a way that makes them confident in their abilities, even when they are nowhere near what is expected, especially in maths."
>
> **TEACHER**

Students told us they like writing when they get to use their imagination, and that more time reading helps with their writing. They also like being able to see their progress. Students report being more engaged when the teachers are good at explaining concepts, making it easier to understand. For maths, students enjoy maths games, problem-solving, and variety in their learning. They like resources that offer them the right amount of challenge.

> "I like writing the most when I can choose the topic... I'm writing about a mushroom guy, it's a made up character."
>
> **STUDENT**

> "We have more structure, more explaining, and more help with maths at school."
>
> **STUDENT**

> "I really appreciate the school's approach to teaching reading and writing. The teachers use a variety of engaging materials, such as colourful picture books and interesting short stories, which have sparked my child's interest."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

Unfortunately, one in ten students (14 percent) report not enjoying their learning in maths, compared to only five percent who report not enjoying English. For students who were not enjoying either English or maths subjects, we heard this is often because the structure of the learning programmes means they are less able to work at their own pace. For example, they may have already learnt the content being taught and want to move ahead. Some also report that the structure limits their creativity.

> "[My teacher] has to stick to a week-by-week program, and it's not as flexible as it could be. It's just do this, then that, then this and that."
>
> **STUDENT**

> "Students seem be being taught all at the same level, which does not suit all students. For example, my child was doing handwriting practice for a whole term and not doing writing, even though she is a competent writer/handwriter already. This new system, or the teaching at this school, in particular, does not always meet all children where they are actually at or differentiate for them."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

## b) Teachers

**Almost half of teachers report improved student engagement in English and maths.**

Similar to their views on student progress, almost half of teachers report improved student engagement in English (47 percent report either a big or some improvement), compared to last year. For structured literacy approaches, just over half of teachers (53 percent) say student engagement has improved a lot since they started using them. Engagement in maths is improving even more, with just under three in five teachers (56 percent) reporting improved student engagement in maths.

> "Using a new program – with explicit teaching and whole class teaching – has increased student engagement."
>
> **TEACHER**

**Figure 32:** *Proportion of teachers who report improved student engagement in English and maths.*

Teachers told us that structured literacy has improved attention and behaviour in the classroom. In classroom observations, we saw that when teachers effectively manage their lessons, students are engaged and report enjoying their learning. We heard from teachers that there is more on task behaviour from students during maths, due to explicit teaching. Teachers report that students are more engaged and less off task, efficiently using class time.

> "Structured literacy has been one of the absolute benefits we've had and the most impactful things we've had around engagement. We have seen the spinoff of that in other spaces. In particular with spelling. Some talk of [it being] too structured, ending up with robot kids. But I would absolutely disagree. You can still have fun, spread joy, and love. Make sure you don't lose the art of teaching."
>
> **TEACHER**

In one class we observed, students were not engaged in their learning. The teacher stayed at the front of the class and delivered content to the whole class. They did not adjust their teaching when students did not understand and did not address off-task behaviour.

### Many parents and whānau are noticing a change in their children's learning and enjoyment.

We heard that parents and whānau are positive about their school's approach to teaching their children literacy and numeracy. Parents shared about hearing from their children about maths games and activities, and structured reading and story writing that their child is enjoying at school. Some children take books home to show their parents the progress in their reading. While parents are seeing positive early progress, we frequently heard that parents would like more information about their child's achievement.

> "While we're not sure on the exact activities done at school, we can see massive progress in identifying numbers and letters, clarity in writing, and beginning to read simple stories."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

## 3) Where are there differences in achievement and engagement?

This section describes where there are differences in:

a) achievement

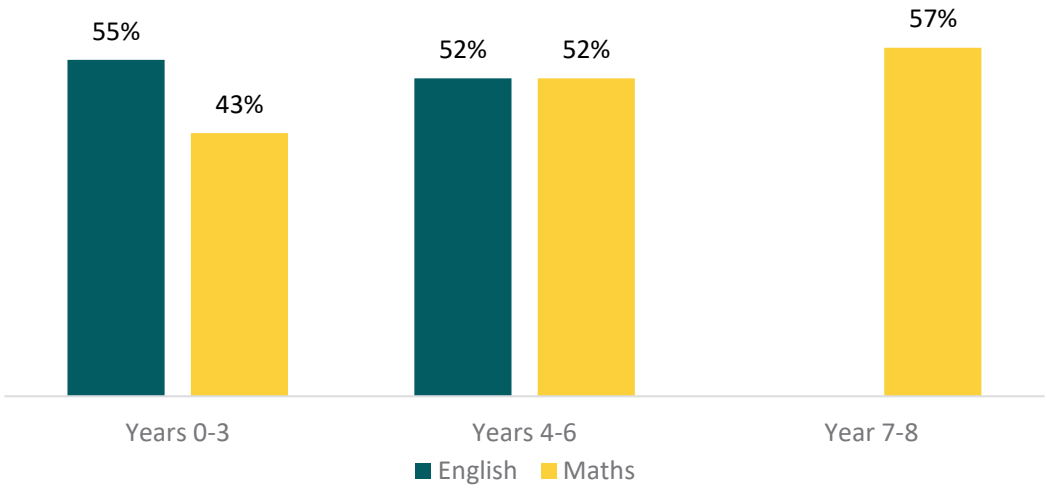
b) engagement.

## a) Achievement

### Teachers are most likely to report improvements in maths achievement for Years 7–8 students.

Teachers are more likely to report improved achievement in maths for older students. Just under three in five teachers report achievement had improved compared to last year for Years 7–8 students (57 percent), compared with those in Years 4–6 (52 percent) and Years 0–3 (43 percent). Achievement in English improved similarly across year groups.

**Figure 33:** *Percentage of teachers who report improvement in achievement, across different year groups.*




Unlike students in Years 0–6, some schools have specialist maths teachers for students in Years 7–8. These specialist teachers may be having a positive impact on student achievement. Leaders told us that these specialist teachers have the expertise to more easily engage with the new curriculum and use existing and new resources to meet the needs of their students.

> "We are lucky to have a maths specialist leading our maths curriculum implementation, adaptability and co-teaching is promoted as teachers upskill."
>
> INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL TEACHER

> "My classroom is open for observation for beginning teachers, I am always happy to model. The hard thing is because I am an expert maths teacher, it does look easy when they observe, but I understand there are struggles and it is hard. They know I am here to help."
>
> **SPECIALIST MATHS TEACHER**

## b) Engagement

**Teachers are more likely to report improved engagement in both English and maths for younger students.**

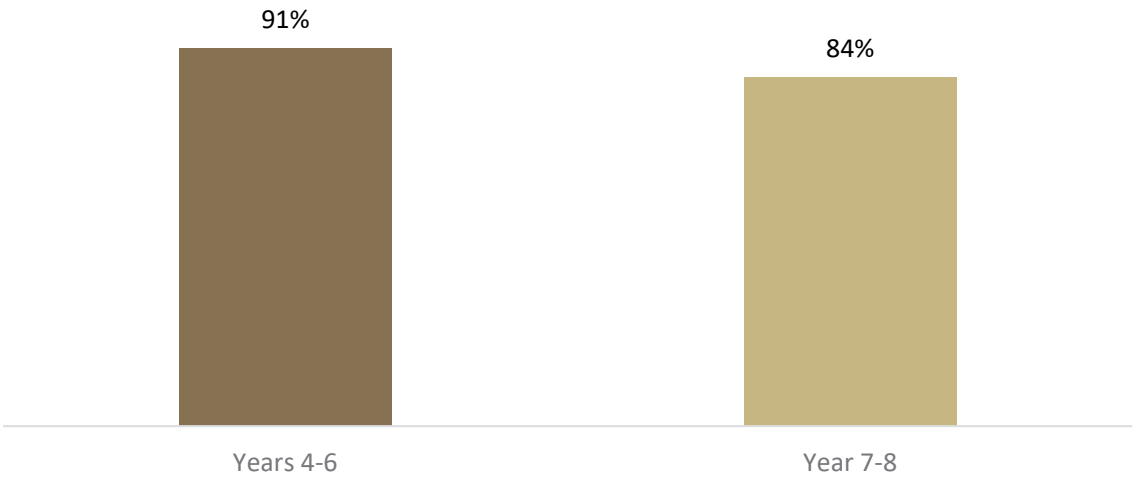
Teachers are more likely to report that engagement has improved for students in Years 0–3 in English (53 percent) compared to those in Years 4–6 (41 percent).

**Figure 34:** *Teachers who report improvement in engagement in English across year groups.*


More younger students report finding maths interesting (91 percent), compared to older students (84 percent). Younger students are very positive about maths games and resources, and told us they are fun and engaging, while older students talked about using the workbooks and not having much group work or games in their maths classes.

> "The maths books are fun... Teachers make us do the test to see what needs to improve... Sometimes we get extensions if it is easy, and sometimes the class stays on a topic a bit longer."
>
> **STUDENT**

**Figure 35:** *Students who report that they find their maths lessons interesting.*




Across both English and maths, we heard that some older primary students find the classroom less interactive than previously, and would prefer more collaborative, hands-on activities.

## Conclusion

English and maths are foundational subjects that set children up for future success. While it is still early in the implementation of the refreshed English and maths learning areas, teachers, parents and whānau report improvements in students' achievement and engagement. Most students enjoy their learning in English and maths, and outcomes are expected to improve. In the next section, we look at what has changed for parents and whānau with the new learning areas.

# **Part 6:** What has changed for parents and whānau?

Students' learning at school can be strengthened when parents and whānau are involved and supportive. We looked at what the changes have been for parents and whānau since the new curriculum was implemented in schools. We found that even though many parents and whānau lacked insight into what the changes for the curriculum are, they understand how their child is learning to read, write, and do maths.

In this section, we set out what the changes have been for parents and whānau, what they know about the changes to the curriculum, how English and maths are being taught, how their child is doing, and how they can best support learning at home.

This part outlines:

1) what parents and whānau know about the changes to the curriculum
2) parents and whānau knowledge of how they can best support their child's learning
3) where there are differences.

## What we found: an overview

**Only half of parents know the curriculum has changed, but most know how their child's school teaches reading, writing, and maths. They also know about their child's progress.**

Only half of parents (49 percent) report that they received information about changes to the curriculum. Seven in ten parents and whānau know about how their child's school is teaching reading and writing (70 percent), and just under two–thirds know how their child's school is teaching maths (65 percent).

**Positively, nine in ten parents know how to help their child with reading, writing, and maths at home, and work with their child on their learning.**

Nine in ten parents and whānau members report they know how to help their child at home with reading and writing (93 percent) and maths (89 percent). Almost nine in ten parents report helping their child at home with reading, writing (93 percent) and maths (85 percent).

**Parents are less confident helping their children with maths and would like more guidance from their child's school to make sure they are helping in the right way.**

More parents and whānau help their children with reading and writing than with maths. We heard parents and whānau would like more guidance from schools around what is being taught and how to teach maths at home to reinforce the way students learn within the classroom.

**Encouragingly, parents from different backgrounds have similar knowledge of what is happening, how their child is progressing, and the help they can provide at home.**

Parents and whānau across different demographics report a similar level of knowledge of what and how their child is learning, and how they can help.

These findings and supporting evidence are set out in more detail below.

## 1) What do parents and whānau know about the changes to the curriculum?

This section shares:

a) parents' knowledge of their child's learning

b) parents' knowledge of their child's progress.

### a) Parents' knowledge of their child's learning

**Only half of parents and whānau know the curriculum has changed.**

Only half of parents and whānau (49 percent) report they have received information about changes to the curriculum from their child's school. Parents and whānau told us that they were more interested in knowing what curriculum change meant for what and how their child was being taught, rather than knowing whether and how the curriculum had changed.

Leaders say they would like more targeted resources to help inform parents and whānau about the changes, and parents and whānau state they would like more communication from schools.

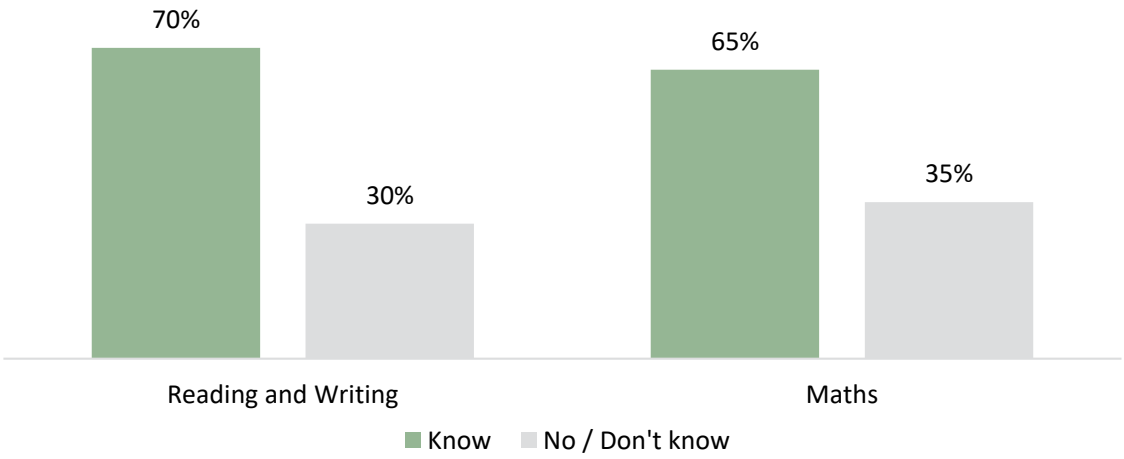
> "We need to make sure we are communicating with parents in different ways, online and face to face, so that parents can engage with their child's learning at school."
>
> **LEADER**

Parents and whānau from different backgrounds have similar knowledge of the curriculum changes. This differs from what ERO found when looking at other curriculum changes, such as for New Zealand Histories and Social Sciences, where we found parents of different backgrounds had different levels of awareness and understanding.

### Most parents know how their child's school teaches reading and writing (70 percent), and maths (65 percent).

Parents told us that knowing what and how their child is learning is important to them. Seven in ten parents and whānau members know about how their child's school is teaching reading and writing (70 percent), and just under two-thirds know how their child's school is teaching maths (65 percent).

**Figure 36:** *Parents and whānau who report their child's school has explained how they teach reading, writing, and maths.*




Parents and whānau demonstrated this knowledge when we spoke to them. They were able to easily describe a range of literacy activities their children do at school, such as focusing on phonics, practicing reading exercises and learning high-frequency sight words. Parents and whānau with neurodivergent children are aware of structured learning approaches using explicit teaching strategies and are positive about their impact.

> "Our school started a few years ago to implement the same learning techniques that now have to be taught, so I feel they are ahead of the game. As it's backed by research, the school has seen great results."
>
> PARENT/WHĀNAU

## b) Parents' knowledge of their child's progress

### Most parents know about their child's progress.

Nearly nine in ten parents and whānau report they know where their child should be at for their year level for English (86 percent) and maths (85 percent). Just over nine in ten parents and whānau (93 percent) receive reporting on their child's progress.

School leaders told us they typically inform parents and whānau about their child's progress every second term (twice a year), though some reported to parents more often. Parents told us they would like more frequent updates about their child's progress, and as discussed earlier, they want more data about achievement.

> "My child does not bring much homework home, so it's hard to tell how she is doing, and reporting is only three times a year."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

Some teachers told us they have been hesitant to share progress updates with parents and whānau since the implementation of the new curriculum due to concerns about the changes in reporting language, and expectations of where students should be performing, as the refreshed curriculum expects students to progress more quickly than the previous curriculum did. We heard teachers are concerned about how parents may respond to progress reports that show their child is performing at a lower level than before (due to the shift in expectations of where students should be under the old and new curriculum).

> "Trying to unpack [the new curriculum] and wondering how we are supposed to assess and report it to parents."
>
> **TEACHER**

Although we found there is no significant difference in what parents and whānau know about the curriculum change, we heard that some parents and whānau receive different kinds and amounts of information from their child's school. Parents who were on a school app, and received regular weekly, monthly or termly updates from teachers were most aware of their child's progress in reading, writing, and maths.

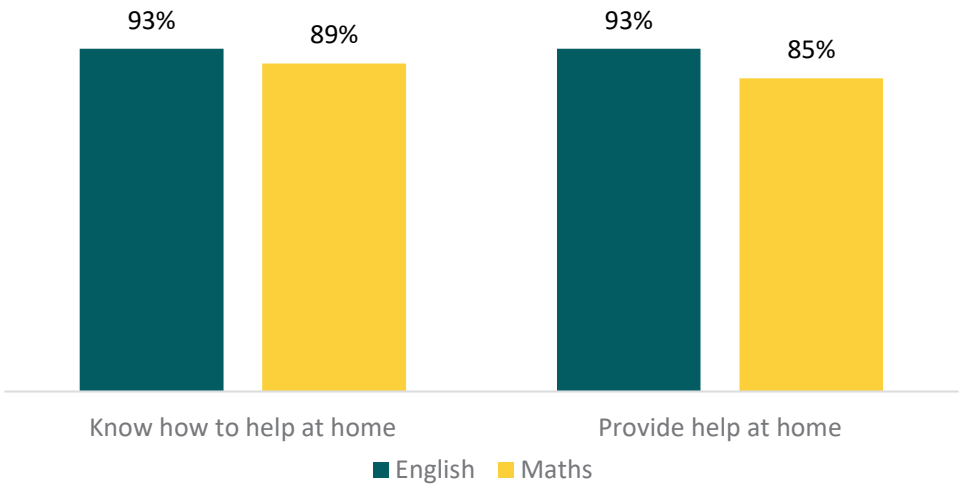
> "We don't get much information from the school apart from parent-teacher meetings. We know other schools have apps that parents can access on their phone and see how their child is doing and get reports on the app."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

## 2) Do parents and whānau know how they can best support their child's learning at home?

**Positively, nine in ten parents know how to help their child with reading and writing (93 percent) and maths (89 percent) at home, and work with their child on their learning.**

Nine in ten parents and whānau report they know how to help their child at home with reading and writing (93 percent), and maths (89 percent). More parents and whānau help their children with reading and writing (93 percent), than with maths (85 percent). For both English and maths, we heard that parents and whānau would like to know what content is being covered at school, so they can supplement this learning at home.

**Figure 37:** *Percentage of parents supporting learning at home for English and maths.*




**Parents are less confident helping their children with maths and would like more guidance from their child's school to make sure they are helping in the right way.**

Alongside having less knowledge of how to help, and being less likely to help their child with maths than with English, parents and whānau shared their concerns about getting maths wrong. They told us they would like more guidance from their child's school so they can target and tailor the support at home to what their child needs and reinforce the way students learn within the classroom.

> "It would be good to see the curriculum and how it is taught to have a better understanding of how to support learning from home. I understand the way of teaching has changed over the years so knowing we are not using outdated techniques, would be good."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

> "My son loves maths and we do some at home but I don't know if my way of teaching fits with how he is being taught at school."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

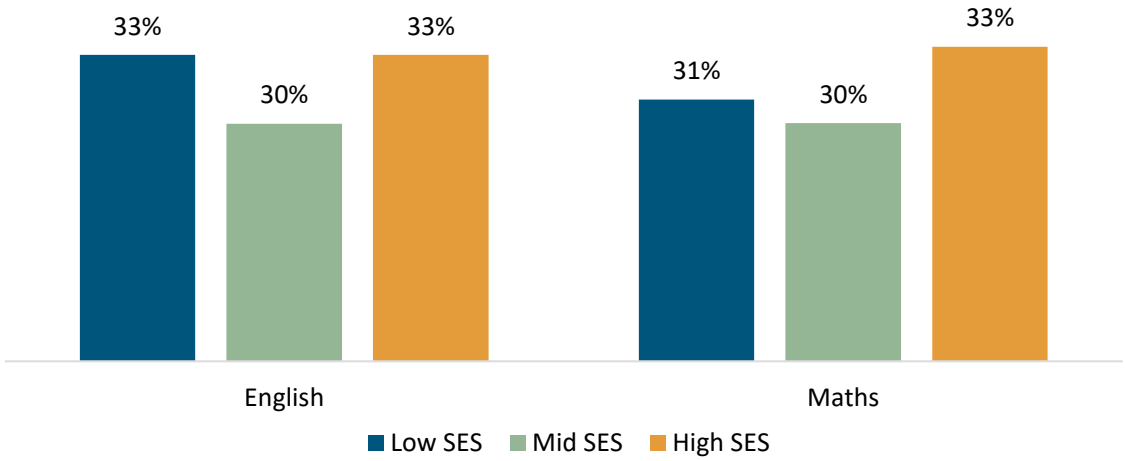
## 3) Where are there differences?

**Encouragingly, parents from different backgrounds have similar knowledge of what is happening, how their child is progressing, and the help they can provide at home.**

Parents and whānau across different demographics and levels of qualification have a similar level of knowledge about their child's learning and progress. Across the spread of socio-economic communities, for reading, writing, and maths:

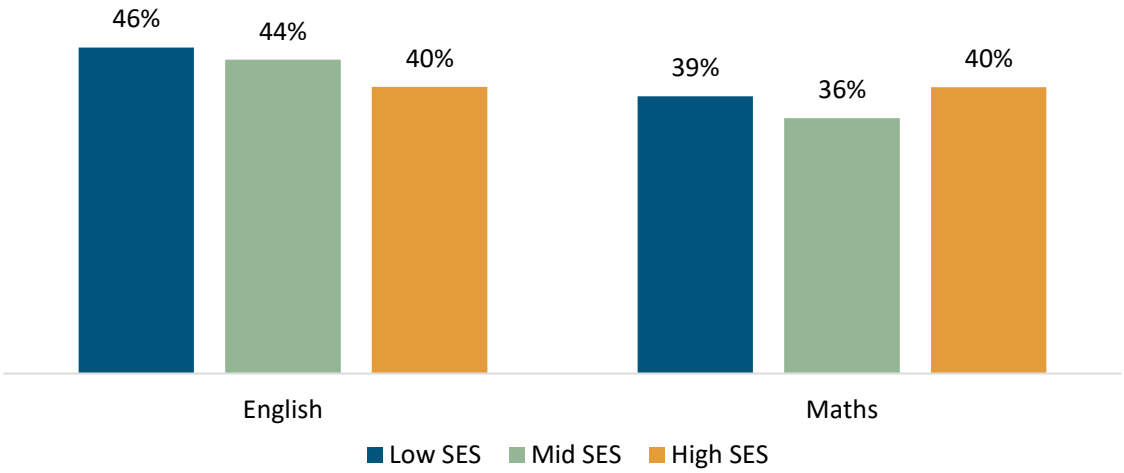
- approximately one in three parents know a lot about what their child should 'understand, know, and do' for their year level
- around one-half know a little
- only one in five do not know what their child should understand, know, or do for their year level.

**Figure 38:** *Percentage of parents who report they know a lot about what their child should be able to 'understand, know, and do' for their year level, by socio-economic community of their child's school.*




Similarly, the ability to help their child's learning at home did not differ across parents and whānau demographics or the socio-economic area that the school is located within. While more parents and whānau know how to help their child with English than with maths, there are no statistically significant differences within English, or maths.

**Figure 39:** *Percentage of parents who report they know a lot about how to help their child with reading, writing, and maths at home, by socio-economic community of their child's school.*




## Conclusion

Parents have good knowledge of how their child is learning, and how they can help as part of the changes to English and maths. Most parents report they know the approach their child's school uses to teach reading, writing, and maths. Nearly all parents report they know how to help their child's learning at home, and provide this help. They are less confident supporting their child's learning in maths, and would like more guidance on how best to help. Surprisingly, parents of different backgrounds have similar knowledge of what is happening and how to help.

In the next section, we look at how schools are delivering the changes.

# **Part 7:** How are schools delivering the changes?

Schools are required to make sure students receive an hour each day for each of reading, writing, and maths. They also need to assess students' progress in these subjects. Having a plan for how to make the changes, and someone responsible for leading those changes, can help schools navigate the shift in teaching. We found teachers consistently do an hour a day of reading, writing, and maths. For many, this is an increase in the time spent on these subjects, especially for younger students and students in lower socio-economic schools.

In this section, we set out how one hour a day of reading, writing and maths is going; how schools are assessing student achievement, and how they are planning and leading the changes.

This part outlines:

1) how one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths is going
2) how schools are assessing students' achievement in reading, writing, and maths
3) how schools are planning and leading the changes
4) where there are differences.

## What we found: an overview

**Around one-third of teachers report that they have increased the time spent on reading, writing, and maths. Around two-thirds of teachers do an hour a day every day for reading (60 percent) and maths (67 percent), and almost all teachers do an hour a day for reading, writing, and maths at least four days a week.**

For many teachers, they report that this is an increase in time spent on explicit teaching.

**Understandably, most schools have not yet made significant changes to assessment for English or maths, as assessment tools have not yet been updated to match the new curriculum expectations.**

Leaders told us they are still exploring what changes are required to their assessment and reporting practices, how they will manage reporting to parents, and ensure consistency. While they wait, almost all schools (96 percent) are using standardised assessments for English and maths. These assessments are commonly phonics checks in younger years, and a mix of PATs and e-asTTLe for students above Year 3. A growing number of schools are reporting phonics checks data.

**Positively, teachers in schools serving lower socio-economic communities spend more time on explicit instruction and are more likely to have increased their time on maths than those in higher socio-economic communities.**

Almost half of teachers (48 percent) in low socio-economic schools have increased the time spent on maths, compared to just under two in five teachers (38 percent) in the middle of the socio-economic scale and a third (33 percent) for the high socio-economic scale.

**Younger students have seen a greater increase in time spent on maths than older students following the introduction of one hour a day.**

Almost half of teachers report that the time spent on maths has increased for Years 0–3, compared to just under three in ten for those in Years 7–8.

**Small schools and rural schools are less likely to have someone leading implementation, or to have a plan for implementing the changes.**

Only eight in ten small schools have a plan for implementing the changes for maths (81 percent), or someone leading delivery on the plan. This is even lower for implementing English, where only seven in ten (69 percent) of small schools have a plan. Only seven in ten rural schools have a plan for English (71 percent) and nearly nine in ten for maths (87 percent). Around eight in ten rural schools have a designated leader for the changes (80 percent for English and 83 percent for maths).

These findings and supporting evidence are set out in more detail below.

## 1) How is one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths going?

As outlined in Part 2, one of the changes to education is the requirement for all school boards to provide:

- 10 hours per week of teaching and learning focused on reading and writing
- five hours per week of teaching and learning focused on maths.

These changes aim to ensure all students are spending adequate time on reading, writing, and maths, recognising the important contribution these foundational skills make in the early phases of learning.

This section sets out:

a) changes in time spent on reading, writing, and maths

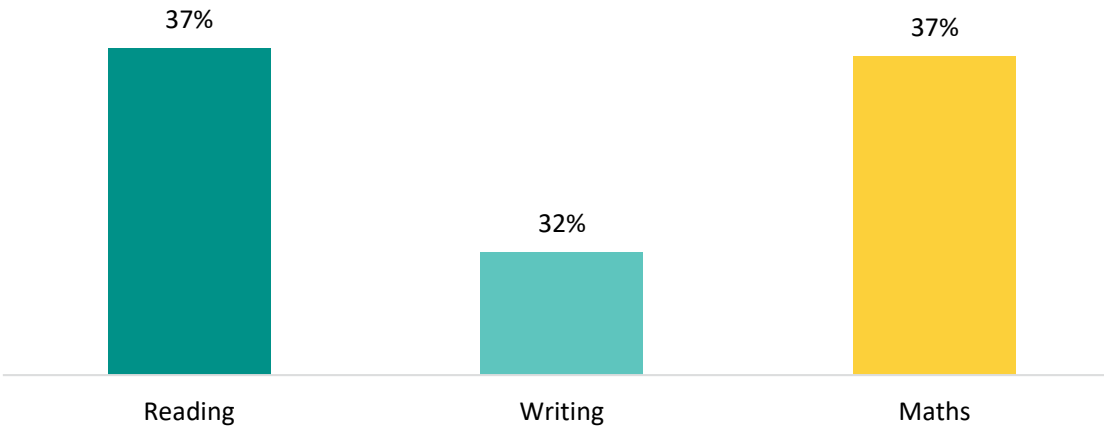
b) how many schools are doing one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths.

## a) Changes in time spent on reading, writing, and maths

### Around one-third of teachers report that they have increased the time spent on reading, writing, and maths.

Nearly two in five teachers (37 percent) report one hour a day is an increase in time spent (either a little or a lot) teaching reading and maths since 2023. Just under a third of teachers (32 percent) report that this is an increase in the time spent teaching writing.

**Figure 40:** *Percentage of teachers who report spending more time on reading, writing, and maths.*




We heard from teachers that the time spent on reading and maths has increased because of the way the lessons are planned by the structured literacy programmes and the maths resources they are using. For some of those who report no change in the time spent, this is because they were already doing one hour a day on reading, writing, and maths, so the requirement to spend one hour a day on these did not increase the time they spent on these subjects. The difference for them is that time spent on reading, writing, and maths is now more intentional and intensified.

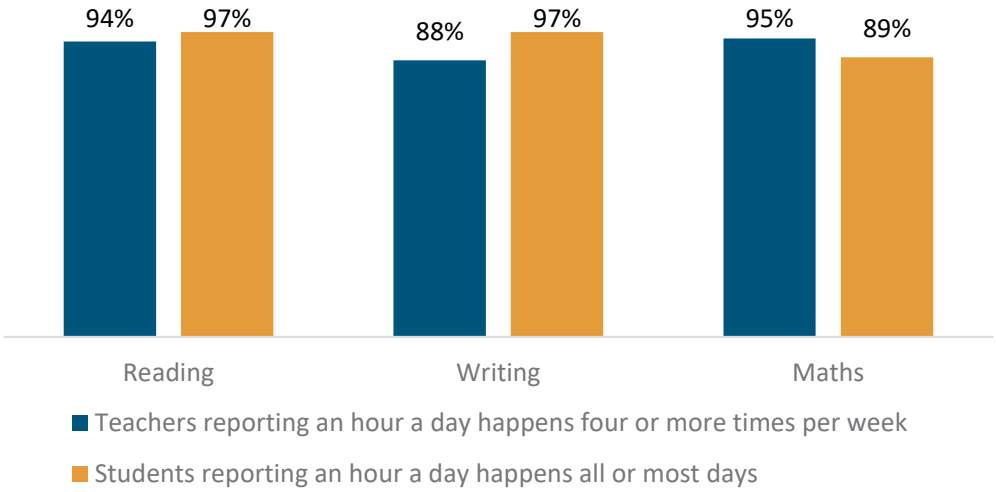
> "The biggest change is that we are doing five days rather than four, and doing a lot of more targeted whole-class teaching instead of working in groups."
>
> **LEADER**

## b) How many schools are doing one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths

**Around two-thirds of teachers do an hour a day every day for reading and maths, and almost all teachers do an hour a day for reading, writing, and maths at least four days a week.**

Around two-thirds of teachers do an hour a day every day for reading (60 percent) and maths (67 percent). Just under half (48 percent) do an hour a day of writing every day. Encouragingly, nearly all teachers are doing one hour a day of reading (94 percent), writing (88 percent), and maths (95 percent) four or more days a week. Students are aware that one hour a day is happening, with nearly all telling us that they are doing this on all or most days.

**Figure 41:** *Percentage of respondents who report teaching 'one hour a day' of reading, writing, and maths.*




Schools incorporated this requirement relatively easily. Over nine in ten schools (92 percent) reported it was not a challenge, or only a minor challenge, to teach one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths. Some schools made changes such as adjusting bell times or redesigning their timetable, to enable them to implement an hour a day.

Teachers shared their uncertainty about what 'counted' towards the hour a day and are still unsure if they are allowed to incorporate other subjects into reading and writing time, such as technology, or a measurement lesson into PE. We also heard that in some schools, one hour a day of maths, reading, and writing means teachers spend less time on other subjects such as science, drama, arts, and PE.

> "Inquiry-based learning has suffered, because most of the day is spent doing reading, writing, and maths."
>
> TEACHER

> "An hour a day has had an impact on the time spent on arts, especially for our intermediate students."
>
> **LEADER**

## 2) How are schools assessing students' achievement in reading, writing, and maths?

Assessment is important for identifying where students are at and what their learning gaps are so that the teaching can be tailored and targeted to students' needs. There are a variety of standardised assessments for English in Years 0–6 and maths in Years 0–8.

**Table 5:** *Summary of standardised assessments across learning areas, for different year levels.*

| Standardised assessments for primary year levels – norms tested | English | Maths | Regulatory expectations, guidance and resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| Years 0–2 | Phonics checks – week 20 and 40 at school, and for students who have additional language or learning needs | | Optional for 2025<br>Required from 2026<br>PLD, guidance, and resources provided by the Ministry |
| Years 3–8 | Reading, writing, and listening comprehension tests – PATs or e-asTTLe[v] | Mathematics tests – PATs or e-asTTLe | Optional for schools to use. Most schools use a combination of tests and combine them with overall teacher judgements to report to parents twice a year |

### Understandably, most schools have not yet made significant changes to assessment for English or maths, as assessment tools have not yet been updated to match the new curriculum expectations.

Teachers and leaders told us they are waiting for clearer guidance and assessment tools that align with the new curriculum. School leaders and teachers consistently shared their concerns about not knowing what is expected for assessing students under the new curriculum. Teachers told us they are unsure what aspects to assess or how to assess student progress, as the tools they currently use are for the old curriculum.

v Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) administered by NZCER and e-asTTle is an online assessment tool, developed to assess students' achievement and progress in reading, mathematics, writing administered by the Ministry.

> "We have made it clear [to parents] that things are changing and we're getting our heads around them as well. It seems that it is a tougher curriculum and you might see some changes there."
>
> **LEADER**

While they wait, almost all schools (96 percent) continue to use standardised assessments for English and maths. These assessments are commonly phonics checks in younger years, and a mix of PATs and e-asTTLe for students above Year 3.[w]

- Just over nine in ten leaders (94 percent) have accessed phonics check assessments and guidance on how to administer them – the use of these will be required from Term 1, 2026.
- Slightly fewer (81 percent) accessed the 2025 assessment guidance for English assessment, and 76 percent had accessed it for maths, which are not yet mandated.

Not all leaders who have accessed this guidance find it useful, with less than two-thirds reporting that it is very or somewhat useful for English (58 percent) and maths (66 percent). Around four in five school leaders have set expectations for teachers to use standardised assessments for reading and writing (78 percent), and maths (86 percent).

**Figure 42:** *Percentage of leaders who have set expectations on teachers to use standardised assessments for English and maths.*


We heard and observed that teachers often use a combination of standardised assessments to monitor student progress and plan next steps for their teaching. Some teachers are using pre- and post-tests linked to the English and maths resources as assessments and only using standardised assessments at the beginning and end of the year to report on progress. Other teachers are using standardised assessments like PATs to identify gaps in student learning to inform their teaching plan.

w Sourced from ERO's individual school evaluation data.

### A growing number of schools have begun to report data on phonics checks.

As part of bringing structured literacy into all schools and kura, the Ministry began introducing a phonics check from January 2025. The phonics check is a short assessment that helps teachers identify how well a child can decode the sounds that make up words, to be done at 20 weeks and 40 weeks of schooling. Phonic checks are not yet compulsory.

In Term 3, 2025, 452 schools reported data following phonic checks, up from 216 schools in Term 2 and from 114 in Term 1, 2025. This represents 23 percent of schools with Year 1 and Year 2 students.

### School leaders are adapting the way they track student achievement under the new curriculum, but want more guidance on how to do this.

Approximately half of schools have already set up new internal systems for tracking students' progress in English (48 percent) and maths (51 percent).

**Figure 43:** *Percentage of leaders who have set up internal systems to track student progress.*


Teachers report that the curriculum and assessment tools currently available are not well aligned, which makes it difficult to track student achievement over time and makes reporting to parents more complex. School leaders report that the uncertainty around assessment is impacting their decision-making around changes to assessment.

## 3) How are schools planning and leading the changes?

### School leaders are taking positive steps to implement the changes, and most school leaders have a plan to implement the changes.

Most school leaders report having a plan for implementing curriculum changes. Just over four in five leaders (83 percent) have a plan for implementing the English learning area, and just over nine in ten (93 percent) have a plan for implementing maths.

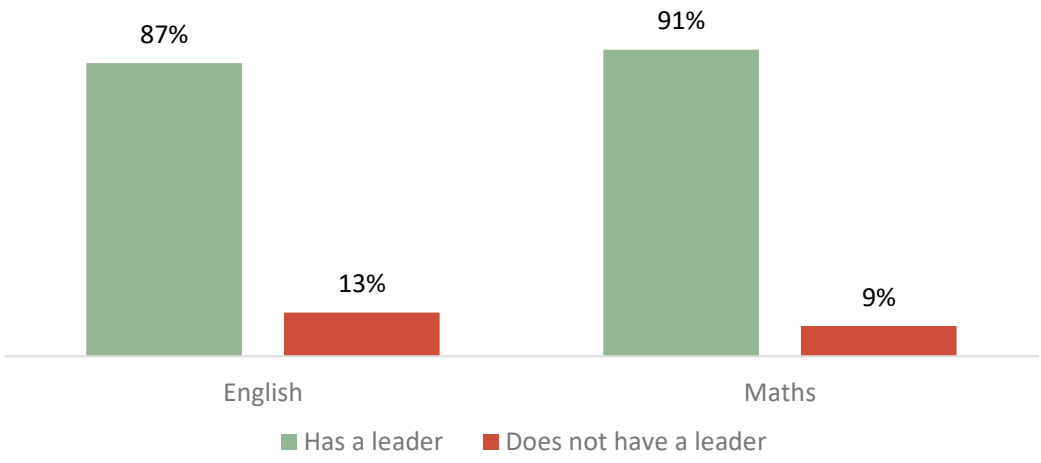
**Figure 44:** *Percentage of leaders who have a plan for implementing the changes.*


We heard that many schools were already using some form of structured literacy approach, so the refreshed curriculum required them to adapt their approach, rather than the greater change needed for maths. This meant some prioritised planning for maths, over English.

### For both English and maths, most leaders have identified a person to lead the change in their school.

Nearly nine in ten leaders (87 percent) have a person responsible for leading the change to the English learning area. This is similar for maths, with just over nine in ten leaders (91 percent) having a person responsible.

**Figure 45:** *Percentage of leaders who report they have a person responsible for implementing the change to the curriculum.*



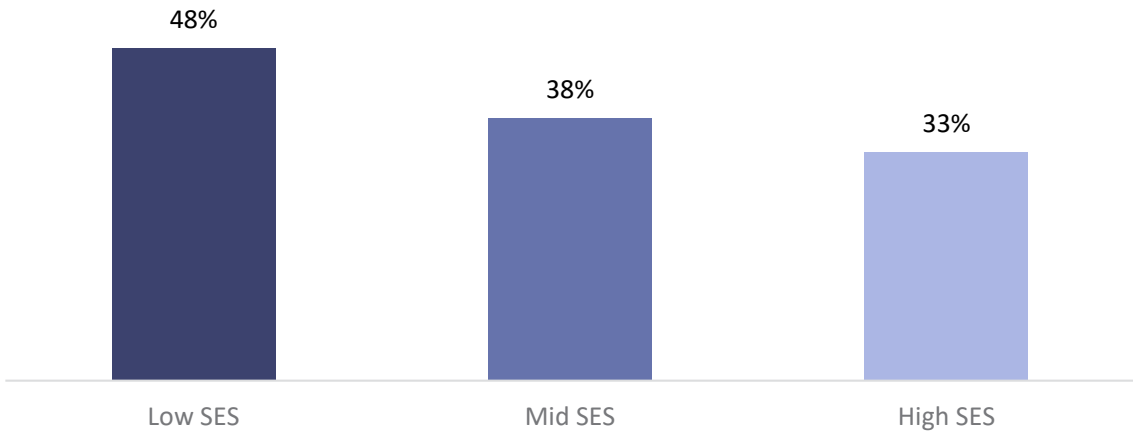
We heard teachers appreciate having a curriculum leader they can go to for questions. Teachers told us they feel supported by having curriculum leaders or subject specialists in their school lead the implementation. They shared examples of these leaders' modelling practices and strategies, conducting observations of practice, and giving targeted feedback.

## 4) Where are there differences in how schools are delivering the changes?

**Positively, teachers in schools serving lower socio-economic communities spend more time on explicit instruction and are more likely to have increased their time on maths than those in higher socio-economic communities.**

Teachers in schools serving lower socio-economic communities are more likely to have increased the time spent on maths as a result of the hour a day changes. Almost half of teachers (48 percent) in low socio-economic schools have increased the time spent on maths, compared to just under two in five teachers (38 percent) in the middle of the socio-economic scale and a third (33 percent) for the high socio-economic scale.

**Figure 46:** *Percentage of teachers who report an increase in the time spent on maths since 2023, across socio-economic status.*



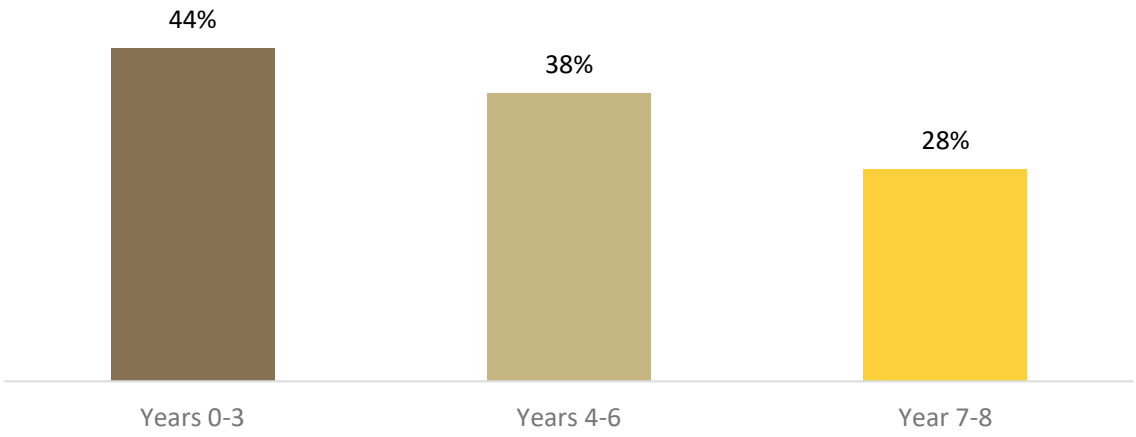

We heard from school leaders that they had identified gaps in maths learning and were intentionally prioritising the teaching of maths in their schools.

> "Maths has been a priority this year, and the school has self-funded specific PLD for teachers to support students who are below their year level."
>
> **LEADER**

### Younger students have seen a greater increase in time spent on maths than older students following the introduction of one hour a day.

Younger students are seeing a larger increase in the time spent on maths through one hour a day – 44 percent of teachers report that the time spent on maths has increased for Years 0–3, compared to 38 percent for Years 4–6 and 28 percent for Years 7–8. We heard that teachers of younger students were previously focusing more on literacy than maths but have now structured their days to ensure they are better covering both literacy and numeracy.

**Figure 47:** *Percentage of teachers who report an increase in the time spent teaching maths since 2023, across year levels.*




We heard teachers talk about the increase in intentional planning and teaching of maths. Leaders talked about making changes to the school timetable to make sure maths was done at times when the students were more likely to focus for the 'hour a day' plan.

> "We can't keep kids focused on maths for an hour. Students are also tired after lunch so they also struggle... Therefore, we need to do some timetabling and juggling so kids have the most amount of energy left."
>
> TEACHER

### Students in Years 4–6 are more likely to do one hour a day of writing most days than younger students.

Just over nine in ten teachers of students in Years 4–6 (91 percent) report doing one hour a day of writing four or more times per week, compared to just under nine in ten (86 percent) for those in Years 0–3. Teachers report that one hour of writing in a day is difficult for younger students, as they are still learning the basics of handwriting.

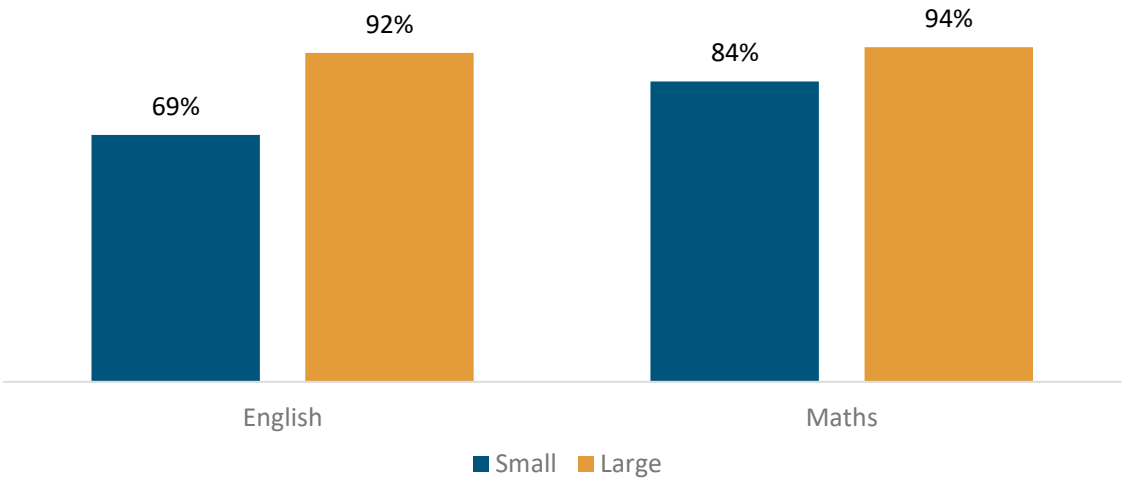
We heard that it is challenging for younger students to maintain attention for one hour when focussing on a new skill. We heard from school leaders and teachers that they can build in one hour a day of reading, writing, and maths in the timetable four days a week, but have to build in a lot of movement and brain breaks to keep their younger students focused. Teachers talked about the importance of building gross motor and fine motor skills needed for writing through movement and art in the younger years.

### Small schools are less likely to have someone leading implementation, or to have a plan for implementing the changes.

Small schools have fewer staff, and leaders usually have classroom teaching responsibilities alongside a broader set of responsibilities than their peers at larger schools. We heard that this limits their time and headspace to engage deeply with new learning.

More than nine in ten large schools have a plan for implementation, and someone to lead the plan, in both English and maths. Only eight in ten small schools have a plan for implementing the changes for maths (84 percent), or someone leading delivery on the plan. This is even lower for implementing English, where only seven in ten (69 percent) of small schools have a plan.

**Figure 48:** *Percentage of leaders from different-sized schools who report they 'have a plan' for implementation of English and maths.*




We heard that leaders in small schools are often teachers too and have limited classroom release time to plan and deliver change. This means many have less time to build their knowledge of what to do and take steps to do it. Leaders told us they are choosing where to spend their energy, as having both English and maths learning area changes happening together has been challenging.

Small schools are also more likely to be led by principals who are newer to the principal role.[35] Many small schools have first-time principals who are new to school leadership, which adds extra challenge when making a big change like implementing a new curriculum. ERO's report 'Everything was new': Preparing and supporting new principals[36] found that just under two in five (39 percent) new principals lead small and very small schools, compared to just under three in ten (29 percent) of all principals.

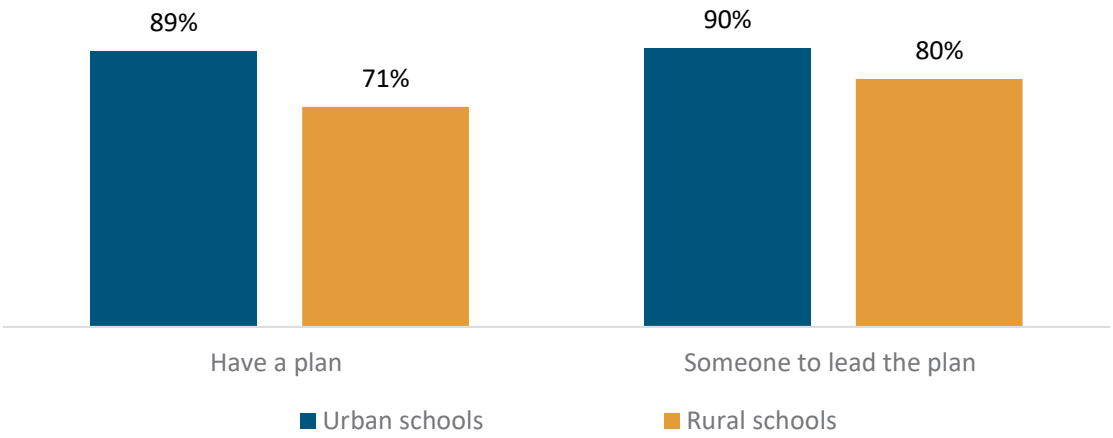
Small schools are less likely to have set up internal systems for tracking progress, particularly for maths progress. For English, there are no significant differences in the proportion of leaders who have set up internal systems for tracking progress. For maths, however, only 42 percent have set up internal systems, whereas more leaders in medium (48 percent) and large and very large schools have (61 percent).

> "I compare to [neighbouring large school] where, you know, he has exactly the same requirements from the Ministry of Education as I do, but he has two DPs, a full-time caretaker, a pastoral care [leader], an office admin and a financial officer. Yes, he's got bigger numbers [of students], granted, but how much of that delegated work do I have to do as well as teach? And the answer is all of it."
>
> **SMALL SCHOOL NEW PRINCIPAL**[37]

### Rural schools are also less likely to have someone leading implementation or to have a plan for implementing the changes.

Rural schools are also less likely to have structured plans in place – only seven in ten have a plan for English (71 percent) compared to nearly nine in ten in urban schools (89 percent). For maths, the difference is smaller, but still significant, 87 percent and 95 percent, respectively. It is also less common for schools in rural settings to have someone to lead the plan, with around eight in ten having a designated lead (80 percent for English and 83 percent for maths), compared to around nine in ten (90 percent for English and 95 percent for maths) in urban schools.

**Figure 49:** *Percentage of urban and rural schools that report they 'have a plan', or have 'someone to lead the plan' for the implementation of English.*




As with small schools, rural school leaders typically hold multiple roles in their school, and many have additional challenges accessing both formal and informal support networks.

> "Each round of application for the MOE PLD was challenging and took a lot of time to coordinate and organise with other schools. Principals and teachers are juggling multiple jobs, and some processes are too time-consuming for small schools."
>
> **RURAL SCHOOL LEADER**

## Conclusion

An hour a day for reading, writing, and maths is shifting teachers' practice, with a notable increase in instructional time – particularly for younger students and in schools serving lower socio-economic communities. Most schools continue to use existing standardised tools, as leaders navigate how best to align assessment and reporting with the new curriculum.

Small and rural schools are less likely to have formalised plans for implementing the changes, or someone designated to lead those changes. However, as shared in Parts 3 and 4, they are teaching the new components and using evidence-based strategies similarly to other schools.

# **Part 8:** How well supported are schools and teachers to make the changes?

To implement necessary changes under the new curriculum, teachers need support from school leaders and access to good professional learning and development (PLD) opportunities, resources, and guidance. We looked at how well supported schools and teachers are to make the changes to the curriculum. This includes both the *what* and *how* to teach, for English and maths.

In this part, we take a look at the supports that schools and teachers access, what they find useful, and how our findings could strengthen future support when implementing the new curriculum.

This part outlines:

1) what school leaders are doing to support teachers
2) how accessible and useful PLD is
3) how accessible and useful the guidance is
4) how accessible and useful resources are
5) where there are challenges.

## What we found: an overview

### Most schools are well-placed to make the changes.

Nine out of ten leaders report they know what they need to do to implement the new curriculum for English (89 percent) and maths (95 percent). Most schools have a plan, and someone to lead the delivery of the plan.

### More leaders are supporting teachers to make the changes for maths than for English.

Nearly all school leaders have set expectations for teachers to use the new maths learning area, and nearly nine in ten have done so for English. English supports were available earlier, and some teachers were more confident using structured literacy approaches.

### Around eight in ten teachers have accessed recent PLD. Both teachers and leaders report that PLD for what to teach is the most useful.

Over eight in ten teachers (82 percent) have accessed PLD on structured literacy approaches, and over three-quarters of teachers (76 percent) have accessed maths PLD. Leaders and teachers told us that they find PLD about structured literacy approaches for English useful.

### The recent English PLD in primary schools has been very impactful. Most teachers are using what they have learnt, using it often, and seeing improvement in student outcomes.

Teachers whose most recent external PLD was on English report they use what they have learnt every day (71 percent) and use it with all students (65 percent). Six in ten teachers (61 percent) report improvements in student outcomes.

### Guidance and resources for English and maths are making a big impact on teachers who have accessed them.

Teachers who have accessed guidance for English are 3.5 times[x] more likely to have changed their practice. Teachers who accessed any resources for maths were nearly 4 times[y] more likely to report changing their teaching practice.

### Not all teachers are clear yet on what structured literacy approaches are, and therefore there may be challenges with how it is being implemented.

Leaders told us that different PLD providers have different views of the core components of English and maths, and the strategies used to teach them. This means some leaders and teachers are unsure what the core components are.

### Teachers are not yet clear how to help students 'catch up' to the new curriculum expectations, extend more able students' learning, or teach multi-year classes.

Some teachers report being unsure about adapting their teaching to meet students' needs, in particular, for students in multi-year classrooms, or when there is a wide range of ability within a year group. They are also uncertain about adapting for neurodivergent or disabled learners.

These findings and supporting evidence are set out in more detail below.

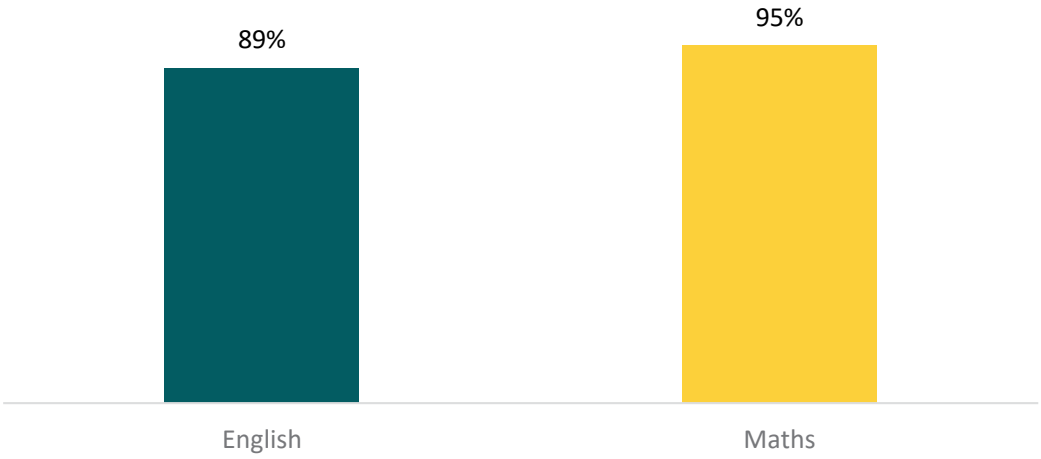
x We used a logistic regression, OR 3.51; $p < 0.01$.
y We used a logistic regression, OR 3.94; $p < 0.01$.

# 1) What are school leaders doing to support teachers

### Most schools are well-placed to make the changes.

Just under nine out of ten leaders (89 percent) know what they need to do to implement the new curriculum for English and nearly all (95 percent) know what they need to do for maths.

**Figure 50:** *Percentage of leaders who know what to do to implement the changes.*




School leaders told us that they know what they need to do to implement the curriculum because of the information they have received from different sources, such as the guidance documents, communications from the Ministry, and through peer networks. As explained in Part 7, most school leaders have a plan for implementation and have identified someone to lead it.

When planning for implementation of the new curriculum, we heard leaders are balancing the demands on teachers and building their own understanding of the new curriculum. Leaders told us they look at the existing workload for their teachers and prioritise the demands on them, deliberately choosing to hold off on some actions while focusing on others. Leaders emphasised that it is better to sequence things well, in a way that will embed sustainable change, rather than attempt to change 'everything at once.' For example, some schools are embedding English first, before having an in-depth focus on the changes for maths.

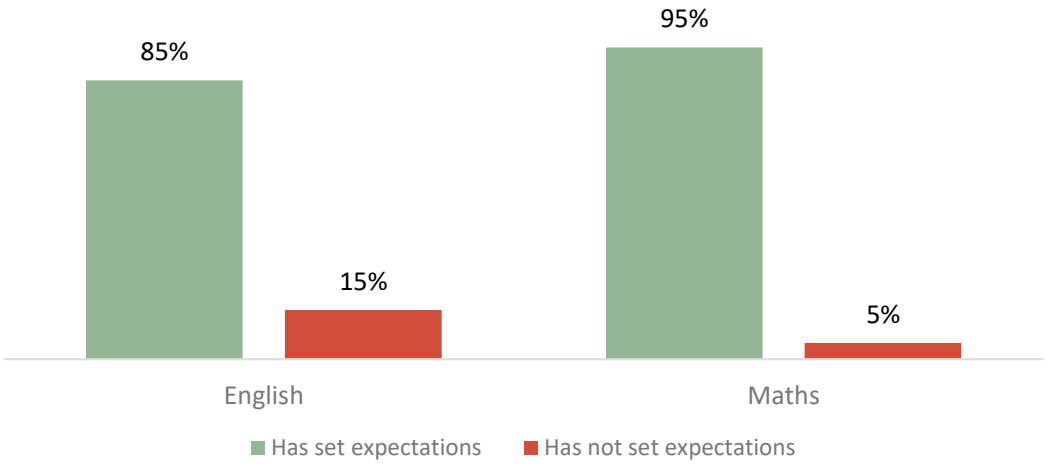
To build teachers' understanding of the curriculum, leaders told us they find out how much teachers already know and understand, then prioritise making time to unpack the curriculum. In particular, they work to ensure teachers' understanding of phases, progression of learning, scope and sequence, and the structure of the new curriculum.

> "We started planning last year, we started using the PLD training and resources with the cohorts this year... We wanted everyone across the school in each year group to have strong knowledge around the science of reading. We have decided to wait till Term 3 to roll out the maths once all the teachers have had maths PLD."
>
> **LEADER**

### More leaders are supporting teachers to make the changes for maths than for English.

More leaders are supporting teachers to make the changes to maths, than to English, as English supports were available earlier and some teachers were more confident using structured literacy approaches. Nearly all leaders (95 percent) set expectations for teachers to use the new maths learning area. Many leaders (85 percent) also do this for English.

**Figure 51:** *Percentage of leaders who report they have set expectations on teachers to use the new curriculum.*




Leaders told us that, while they are balancing competing demands on teachers' time, they are clear with teachers that they are expected to be delivering the new curriculum. Some leaders told us that they are putting significant effort into making the changes as easy to engage with as possible for their teachers and are doing what they can to support them to make it manageable to implement, while maintaining the expectation that the curriculum will be used.

## 2) How accessible and useful is PLD?

The implementation of both the new content of the curriculum, and the new teaching practices that are part of it, is supported by the Ministry. The Ministry provides schools with a range of guidance, resources, and professional development. Some schools also access support from other providers to help them make the change.

There are three key types of support available:

- **Professional learning and development** (PLD) that helps support teachers to understand what and how to teach the new curriculum
- **Resources to support implementation in the classroom** such as textbooks and funding for other tools
- **Guidance** that sets out timelines, expectations and helps leaders plan for the change.

We asked leaders and teachers about the following PLD options that are available. These are summarised below.

**Table 6:** *A summary of some of the PLD options that were available for leaders and teachers.*

| PLD | Description |
|---|---|
| **PLD for structured literacy approaches** | PLD for Years 0–6 teachers provided by Ministry-accredited and Ministry-funded providers. These include programme-based PLD (e.g., Better Start Literacy Approaches (BSLA) and iDEAL) and PLD from providers contracted by schools directly. |
| **PLD for maths** | PLD for Years 0–8 teachers provided by Ministry-accredited and Ministry-funded providers, maths resource providers, and from providers contracted by schools directly. |
| **Structured literacy approaches PLD for targeted and tailored teaching** | Ministry-funded PLD to support teachers to work with students who need additional learning support in the classroom. |
| **Structured literacy approaches staffing resource years 0–2** | Targeted funding to support teacher release for additional specialised training in structured literacy approaches. This aims to accelerate progress for those students at risk of underachievement. |
| **Teacher-only day resources** | Used by school leaders to provide in-school PLD for teachers. These are focused on the science of learning. |

This section sets out:

a) access to PLD

b) usefulness of PLD

c) impact of PLD.

## a) Access to PLD

### Around eight in ten teachers have accessed recent PLD.

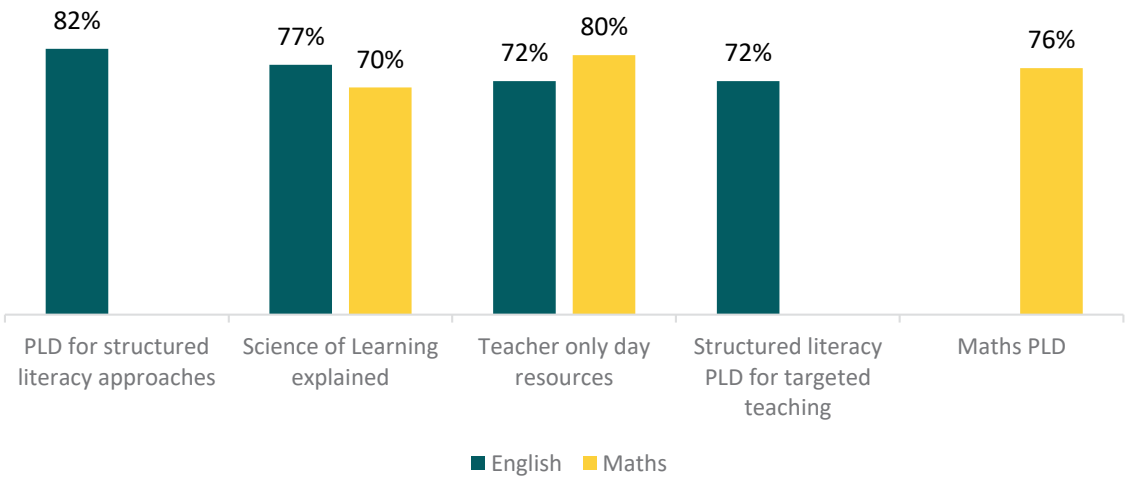
The refreshed curriculum has been required since the start of 2025. Already, just over half of leaders (51 percent) report that all their teachers have had English PLD, and just over seven in ten leaders report all their teachers have had maths PLD (71 percent of leaders report that all of their Years 0–3 teachers have had PLD, 74 percent for Years 4–6 teachers, and 72 percent for Years 7–8 teachers).

To support their schools to implement the changes, leaders access the PLD focused on which components should be taught the most for both English and maths. Around nine in ten leaders access PLD for their school on structured literacy approaches (93 percent), and maths PLD (89 percent). This results in just over three-quarters of teachers (76 percent) accessing maths PLD and just over eight in ten teachers (82 percent) accessing PLD on structured literacy approaches. These are the PLD sessions most specific to the content being taught under the new English and maths learning areas.

More than eight in ten leaders also access the teacher-only day resources, which focus on both *what* and *how* to teach (87 percent for maths and 84 percent for English). Around eight in ten teachers access PLD that was supported by these resources for maths (80 percent) and more than seven in ten (72 percent) for English.

The other PLD available, which focuses more on the techniques to support the content, is well used, but not to the same degree. Just over seven in ten leaders access the structured literacy approach for targeted and tailored teaching PLD (72 percent) and PLD for accelerated learning for their schools (71 percent).

**Figure 52:** *Proportion of teachers who have accessed different PLD for English and maths.*



Leaders told us they are taking deliberate steps to maximise their investment in teacher PLD. They also seek structured literacy PLD that aligns with their teacher and student learning needs. Leaders told us that they acknowledge their teachers need time to complete PLD to enhance their teaching of the new curriculum, and this has been an important factor in how leaders have decided to implement the changes.

> "We employed [an expert] to work alongside in the classroom with students and teachers. So, we gave them the time and expertise on a more regular basis than just a one-off three days and say, 'Here you go. Go and do it."
>
> **LEADER**

Some teachers told us they appreciate PLD from providers of the resources they are using, as it helps them know how best to use the resources in the classroom.

We heard from teachers that their leaders are making efforts to identify the best PLD options for their teachers and finding ways to make sure they can attend. This includes providing petrol and accommodation in some cases. With online PLD options, leaders organise relievers so that teachers can attend webinars.

**Leaders report having good information and practical support to plan, select and engage teachers in PLD.**

Most leaders and teachers told us they have good information about the PLD that is available and know what they need to do to access it. Accessing funding for additional teacher release and allocation for targeted structured literacy teaching in the first two years of schooling is quite straightforward. This allows schools to send selected teachers for the structured literacy approaches PLD for tailored and targeted support. Leaders spoke positively about how curriculum advisors help them identify what funding is available and how to apply for it.

Leaders told us that the additional teacher-only days give them dedicated time to engage teachers collectively about the changes. The teacher-only day resources allow them to focus this time on the key components of the changes, which makes sure that their teachers are on the same page about how to change things in the classroom.

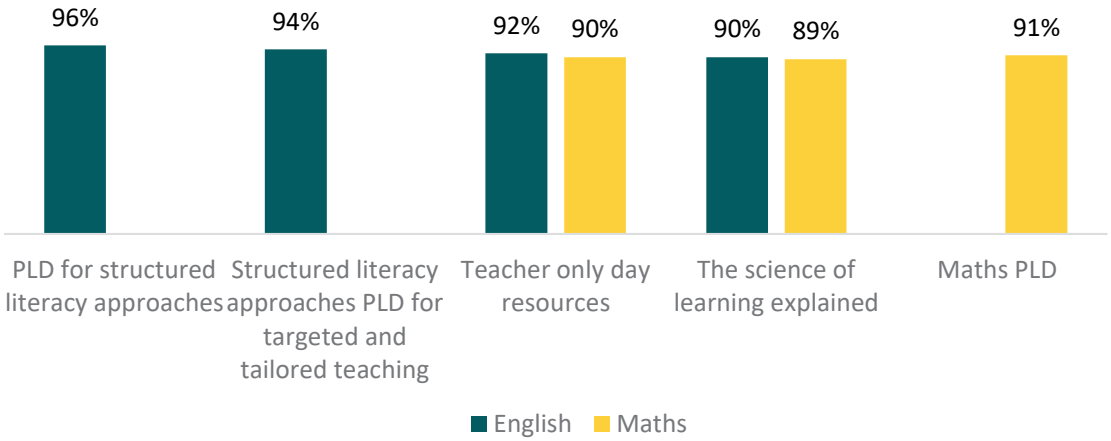
## b) Usefulness of PLD

**Both teachers and leaders report that PLD for what to teach is the most useful. PLD on how to teach, or for accelerating student achievement is less useful.**

Most leaders and teachers are positive about the PLD that they access and report that it is useful. More than nine in ten (93 percent) leaders and nearly all teachers (96 percent) told us that PLD for structured literacy approaches for English is useful. More than nine in 10 teachers also find this for structured literacy PLD and targeted and tailored teaching for English (94 percent). For maths, more than eight in ten leaders (82 percent) and nine in ten teachers (91 percent) told us the PLD is useful.

Internal PLD provided from the teacher-only day resources has also been valuable for teachers and leaders. Nine in ten teachers (92 percent for English and 90 percent for maths) find this PLD useful, and around eight in ten leaders (76 percent for English and 83 percent for maths) told us it was useful for their school. Nearly nine in ten teachers (90 percent for English and 89 percent for maths) also find the science of learning explained useful.

**Figure 53:** *Percentage of teachers who report that English and maths PLD is useful.*




Overall, teachers find receiving *any* PLD targeted for the curriculum refresh useful. Teachers who had PLD for structured literacy approaches are more likely to report being prepared because the PLD helps them understand what they need to do in the classroom. They told us that resource-based PLD makes them more capable and confident. Teachers also told us that their previous training, or initial teacher education, has not left them well prepared for the delivery of structured literacy approaches.

> "I think for me, if I'm thinking about the curriculum-based stuff, it's giving us practical things that I can then apply into my teaching and make [it] better."
>
> **PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER**

We heard similar things about the PLD for maths. Teachers told us that they value the PLD that the developers of the Ministry-funded maths classroom resources provide. It gives them practical ways to change what they do in the classroom.

Leaders told us that having good external PLD that aligns with the curriculum and is evidence-based is useful for implementation. Teachers prefer in-person opportunities as they facilitate better discussion and knowledge-sharing across participants. They told us it is helpful when PLD is specific to their school context. Leaders and teachers emphasise that sequencing the PLD in the two learning areas would be useful.

## c) Impact of PLD

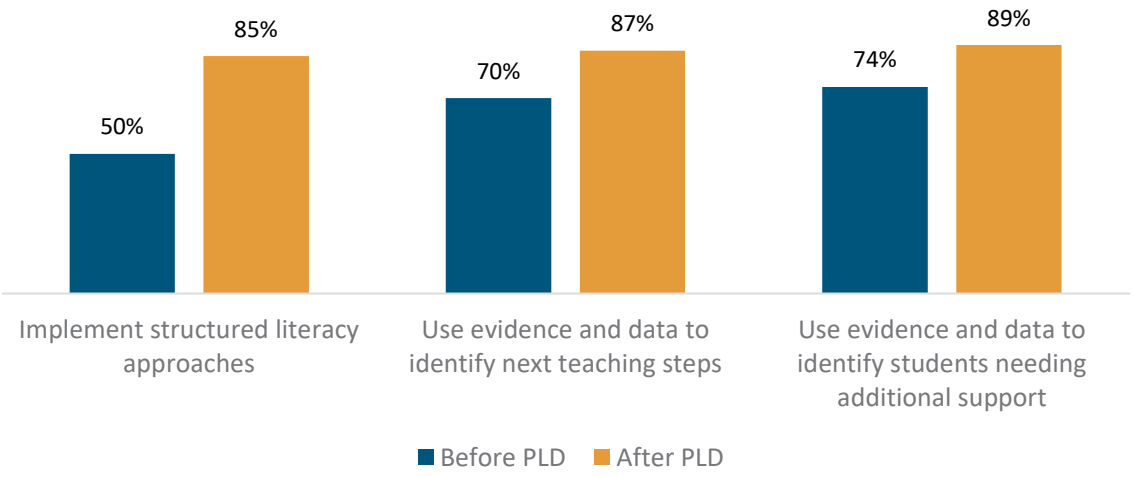
### PLD on structured literacy approaches improves teachers' knowledge and confidence.

Teachers who participated in Ministry PLD on structured literacy approaches grew their knowledge of what these are. Before the PLD, teachers had 60 percent correct answers on knowledge questions, and this increased to 78 percent following the PLD. Teachers also reported improved confidence to:

- implement structured literacy approaches (50 percent before the PLD, 85 percent after the PLD)
- use evidence and data to identify next teaching steps (70 percent, to 87 percent)
- use evidence and data to identify students needing additional support (74 percent, to 89 percent).

As shared in Part 5, students' achievement also improved when their teachers participated in the PLD.

**Figure 54:** *Percentage of teachers who report they are confident to use elements of structured literacy approaches, before and after PLD[z].*




z From Ministry of Education monitoring.

### The PLD to support teachers with the refreshed English and maths learning areas is more useful than other PLD teachers experience.

Nearly all teachers report that PLD for supporting them to implement English and maths is useful:

- 96 percent report PLD on structured literacy approaches is useful.
- 91 percent report PLD on maths is useful.

This compares to eight in ten teachers who report that PLD is useful overall.[aa]

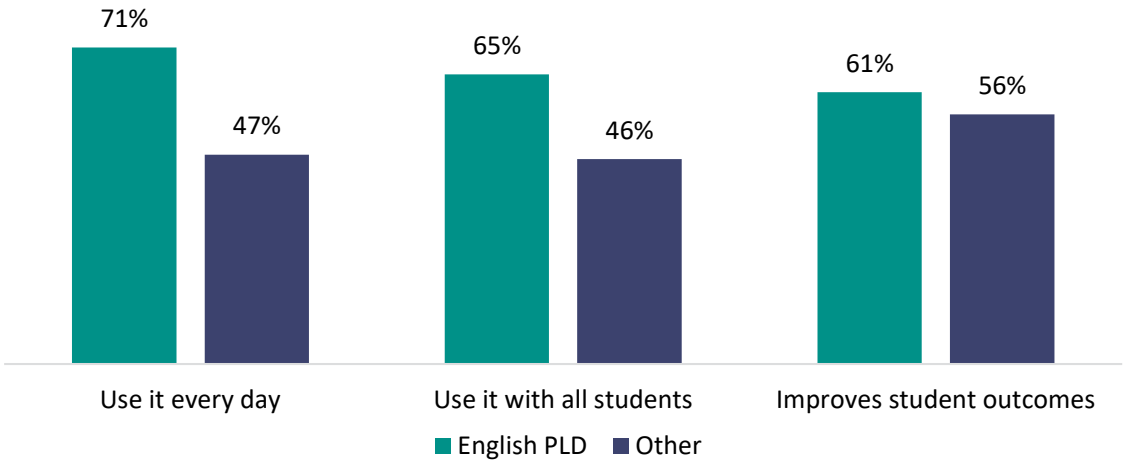
### The recent English PLD in primary schools has been very impactful. Most teachers are using what they have learnt, using it often, and seeing improvement in student outcomes.

In Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?, we asked teachers about their recent PLD. Teachers whose most recent external PLD was on English report that they:

- use it often in the classroom. Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) use it every day
- use what they have learnt widely in the classroom. Two-thirds (65 percent) use it with all students
- see improvement in student outcomes. Six in ten (61 percent) report improvements in student outcomes.

In all these areas the recent English PLD in primary schools has had more impact than other PLD.

**Figure 55:** *Primary school teachers who report their most recent external professional development was on English, compared to teachers receiving other professional development*




aa Teachers of students in Years 0-8 report their most recent PLD was very helpful for their teaching practice (81 percent), and in achieving better student outcomes (80 percent), from ERO (2025). Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?

## This English PLD incorporated many of the components of effective PLD.

### Well-designed

This PLD package included the key components of building teachers' knowledge, developing teaching techniques, and motivating teachers to use PLD. The recent PLD is strongly focused on building teachers' knowledge and developing clearly defined techniques and approaches. We heard from teachers that they are able to make immediate changes to their practice. The close monitoring of progress is highly motivating for teachers. Seeing student outcomes improve after a short time reinforces the impact of the changes teachers make.

> "Structured literacy programme explicitly taught us how to use the resources, how to go through the entire book and the speed word, fun ways of teaching. Understanding why it works, how it goes through all the letters, and being able to read independently and confidently..."
>
> **BEGINNING TEACHER**

### Well-selected

This PLD package included the key components of being evidence-based, relevant and clearly linked to student outcomes. PLD on structured literacy is directly relevant to the changes in curriculum, meaning that teachers are immediately using what they learn in the classroom – the changes to their practice are required and relevant.

### Well-embedded

This PLD package included the key components of support to implement, clarity about what can be adapted, and clear monitoring. Alongside the strong evidence base and motivation to make change, the broader system conditions have had a strong role in supporting the uptake, embedding, and therefore impact, of PLD in English.

In addition, a core component of structured literacy approaches is monitoring student progress and responding to students' needs. This means teachers are highly engaged in understanding what aspects of their embedding of PLD are working or not and adjusting their approach. The nationwide rollout of the refreshed English learning area this year added urgency and timeliness, supporting the uptake, embedding, and therefore impact, of PLD in English.

## 3) How accessible and useful is the guidance?

We asked leaders and teachers about the following guidance that was available.

**Table 7:** *A summary of some of the guidance that was available for leaders and teachers.*

| Guidance | Description |
|---|---|
| **Timelines and key dates for implementation** | Guidance to support schools to plan their implementation with key dates specified |
| **Regulatory expectations for the updated curriculum** | An overview of new requirements for schools from Term 1, 2025 |
| **Getting Ready, Getting Started materials** | A resource with an example plan for:<br>→ Term 4, 2024 – to get ready to implement<br>→ Term 1, 2025 – to get started<br>These plans include information about ordering resources, enrolling teachers for PLD and organising teacher-only days |
| **English Years 0–8 leadership guidance** | Guidance for leaders to help prioritise and plan implementation of the new English learning area in their school |
| **Maths Years 0–8 leadership guidance** | Guidance for leaders to help prioritise and plan the implementation of the new Mathematics and Statistics learning area in their school |
| **Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre school update** | A regular email update to school leaders providing the latest curriculum, assessment, and aromatawai news |
| **He Pitopito Kōrero School leaders bulletin** | A key communication channel for the Ministry to disseminate information to school leaders |
| **Accelerating progress leadership guidance** | This guidance is to help school leaders plan for and review the approaches they use to accelerate progress so that all students can access the curriculum |

This section sets out:

a) access to guidance

b) usefulness of guidance

c) impact of guidance.

## a) Access to guidance

### Guidance and expectations information is accessed less than PLD or resources.

Leaders report that they access a range of the guidance available to them. The guidance that leaders access the most focuses on what is required of them under the new curriculum. More than nine in ten leaders (94 percent) access the timelines and key dates for implementation. Just over nine in ten leaders (93 percent) had accessed regulatory expectations for the updated curriculum. The School Leaders' Bulletin and the Curriculum Centre updates are the next most accessed source of guidance for leaders (82 percent of leaders access the School Leaders' Bulletin for maths, and 84 percent for English; and 78 percent access the Curriculum Centre updates for maths, and 80 percent for English).

We heard from leaders that they engage more easily with guidance when they don't have to go looking for it and can quickly engage with the content. They told us they like to have clear expectations of what is expected, by when, and know what they need to do to make a change quickly. Some leaders told us they spend considerable time choosing resources and guidance, and that the Tāhūrangi website is hard to navigate.

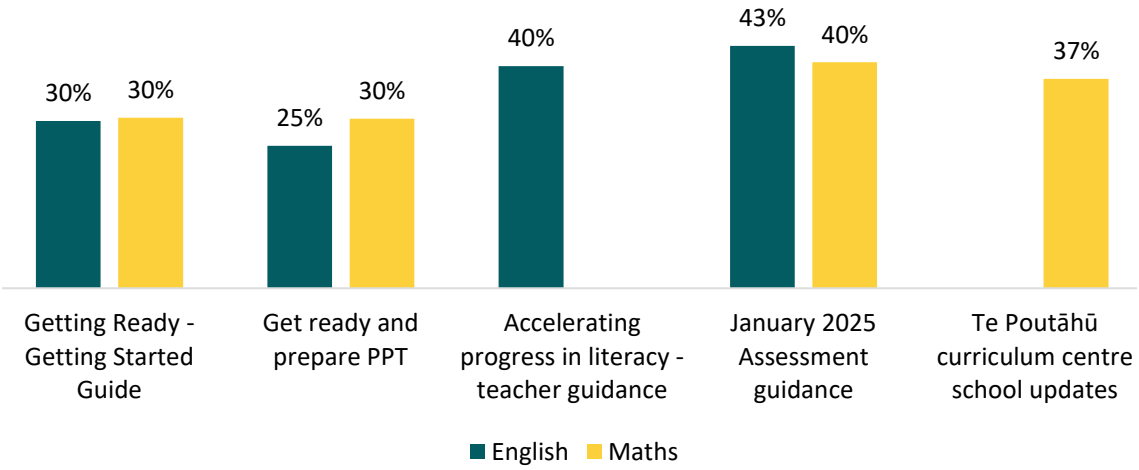
> "In a small school with only four teachers, and two are beginning teachers and a teaching Principal, there is only one senior teacher available to lead the curriculum implementation, while teaching full-time and mentoring the other teachers. She hasn't had the time to look through all the documents. We are running behind on maths."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

> "Navigating the documents and the website was challenging, rural and small school principals are time poor and wearing many hats, property management, payroll, running learning support and classroom teaching. What we need is information that is targeted for small rural schools and is easy to read quickly."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

### As expected, teachers access guidance much less than leaders.

When they do access it, they focus on how to support their students to catch up, with four in ten teachers (40 percent) accessing the *Accelerating progress in literacy – Teacher guidance*. Fewer teachers access material focused on the specifics of *how* to implement, with just under a third of teachers (30 percent) accessing the *Getting Ready, Getting Started* slides for English and (30 percent) for maths.

**Figure 56:** *Percentage of teachers accessing guidance and expectations on English and maths.*




We heard from teachers that they do not have much visibility of the guidance being sent to schools through the school leaders' bulletin and the curriculum centre updates. Teachers are focused on implementing what they are learning from their PLD or directly from the structured literacy and maths resources.

## b) Usefulness of guidance

### Leaders report that the guidance that is regularly sent directly to them is useful.

Nearly nine in ten leaders (88 percent) find the He Pitopito Kōrero School Leaders bulletin useful. More than eight in ten (84 percent) find the Te Poutāhū curriculum centre school update useful. Fewer leaders find the *Accelerating Progress in literacy – Teacher guidance* useful (64 percent for English and 75 percent for maths).

Leaders shared they appreciate resources they can print out and put in their staffrooms to share with teachers easily, such as a 5 Year Plan poster, and advice to whānau on one hour a day. Some leaders told us that the regular short updates are the most useful guidance because they enable them to quickly keep up to speed with what needs to be changed.

Some leaders report it can be difficult to know they are doing what is expected, as it is not always clear across different information sources.

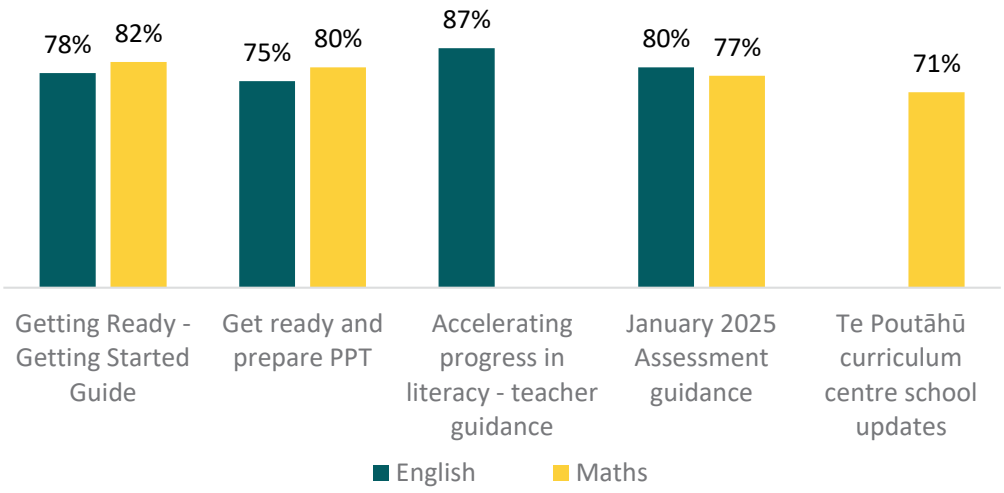
## c) Impact of guidance

### Teachers also find the guidance is useful, and those who have accessed guidance for English are 3.5 times more likely to have changed their practice.

While teachers use guidance less than leaders, those who do use it find the guidance useful. This is especially useful for getting started quickly with the changes and helping to catch students up. Teachers who access guidance for English are 3.5 times[ab] more likely to change their practice.

Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) of those who used the *Accelerated Progress in Literacy – Teacher guidance* find it useful. Around eight in ten teachers (78 percent for English and 82 percent for maths) find the *Getting Ready, Getting Started* guide useful, with similar numbers finding the accompanying PowerPoint useful (75 percent for English and 80 percent for maths). In particular, we heard that the specificity of criteria and guidelines for English is helpful.

**Figure 57:** *Percentage of teachers who report different English and maths guidance is useful.*




ab We used a logistic regression, OR 3.51; $p < 0.01$.

## 4) How accessible and useful is the guidance?

We asked leaders and teachers about the following guidance that was available.

**Table 8:** *A summary of some of the resources that were available for leaders and teachers.*

| Resources to support implementation in the classroom | Description |
|---|---|
| **An hour a day resources** | Provide examples of daily and weekly classroom plans to support the implementation of an hour a day of reading, writing and maths |
| **The Ministry provided maths teaching and student resources** | Ministry-funded classroom maths teaching and learning resources. These include individual student workbooks, teacher manuals, online lesson plans, and assessments. Schools had the option of choosing one of the following providers: Numicon, Maths No Problem, Prime, and Oxford |
| **Funding contribution for resources to support structured literacy approaches** | Funding for schools to buy additional resources for their structured literacy programmes, e.g., decodable books, alphabet magnets and cards to teach phonics |
| **Accelerating learning in English and maths** | Ministry commissioned report that provides evidence-based teaching practices and interventions in oral language, reading, writing, and maths for teachers to use in their classroom when working with students who need additional support or acceleration |

This section sets out:

a) access to resources

b) usefulness of resources

c) impact of resources.

### a) Access to guidance

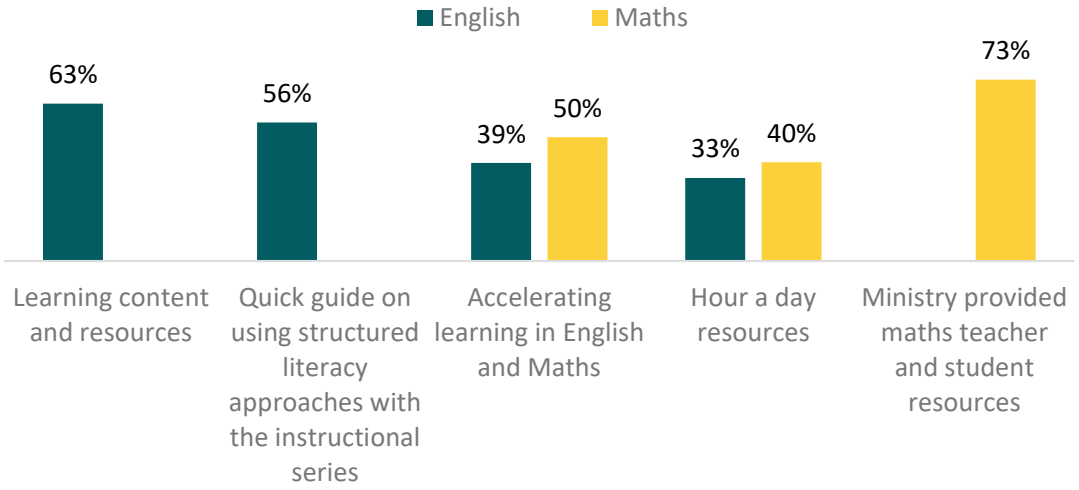
**Teachers and leaders most often access resources for what to teach.**

Teachers reported they used resources that they could pick up and use. The Ministry-provided maths teacher and student resources, including student workbooks, teachers' manuals and online lesson plans, are accessed by nearly nine in ten leaders (89 percent) and more than seven in ten teachers (73 percent). These resources support teachers to deliver against the new curriculum by giving them a simple way to approach and step through the content. Schools can also access additional resources from other providers.

Leaders use the funding contribution for resources to support structured literacy, with nearly nine in ten leaders (88 percent) using that to support their schools. Teachers frequently use the learning content and resources for English, with more than six in ten (63 percent) doing so.

The hour a day resources are less frequently accessed, with only seven in ten leaders (73 percent for English and 74 percent for maths) and fewer than one in four teachers accessing them (33 percent for English and 40 percent for maths).

**Figure 58:** *Percentage of teachers accessing resources in English and maths.*




Leaders and teachers shared that they appreciate the clearly sequenced and structured new resources to support delivery in the classroom. Some of the resources provide daily and weekly lesson plans for each unit or topic, which teachers told us helps them, as they assimilate new knowledge and skills. It reduces the time burden on individual teachers to look for appropriate resources for each classroom and brings consistency across classrooms.

Some leaders told us they felt rushed to choose which maths resource to use and that the differences between the four options available were not clear, but they found the resources useful once they arrived. Some leaders of intermediate schools told us that they try to match the resources they were choosing to those used by their feeder schools to support a better transition between primary and intermediate. Their intention is for greater predictability, familiarity, and consistency for their students.

## b) Usefulness of resources

### More teachers report resources that they can readily use in the classroom are useful, compared to those that are more focused on explaining and building knowledge of how to teach.

For English, nearly all teachers (94 percent) who access the English learning content and resources find them useful and nine in ten (90 percent) find the *Quick Guide* on using structured literacy approaches useful. The Ministry-provided maths resources are seen as useful by nearly nine in ten teachers (88 percent) and eight in ten leaders (80 percent).

The hour a day resources, which are accessed less, are also considered useful by fewer leaders. These are focused more on building teachers' skills for teaching, and strategies to use for teaching reading, writing or maths. Nearly half of leaders who use them (47 percent) find these not very useful or not useful at all for English and more than three in ten (31 percent) say the same for maths.

Teachers and leaders reported that when it is clear how provider resources are aligned to the new curriculum, it is easier for teachers to know what to do and how.

**Figure 59:** *Proportion of teachers who find resources for English or maths useful.*

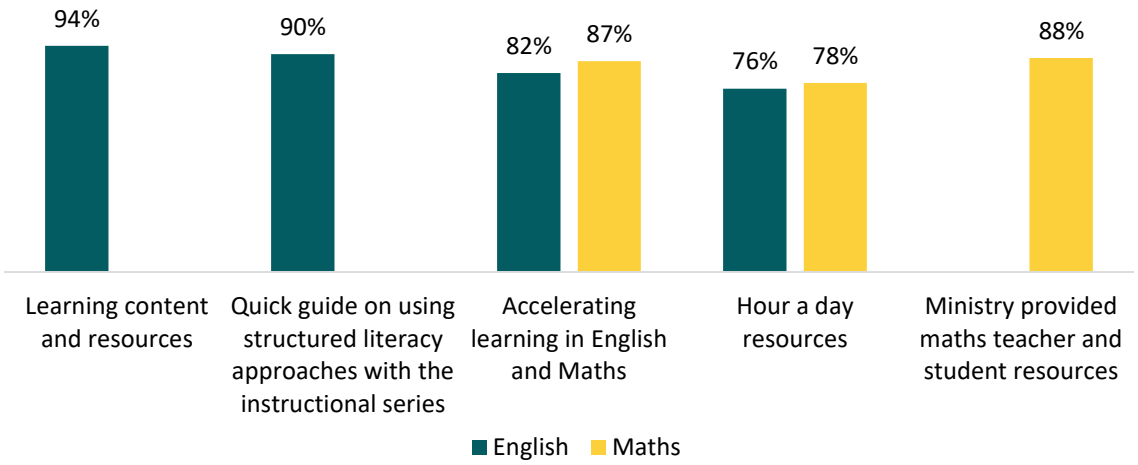
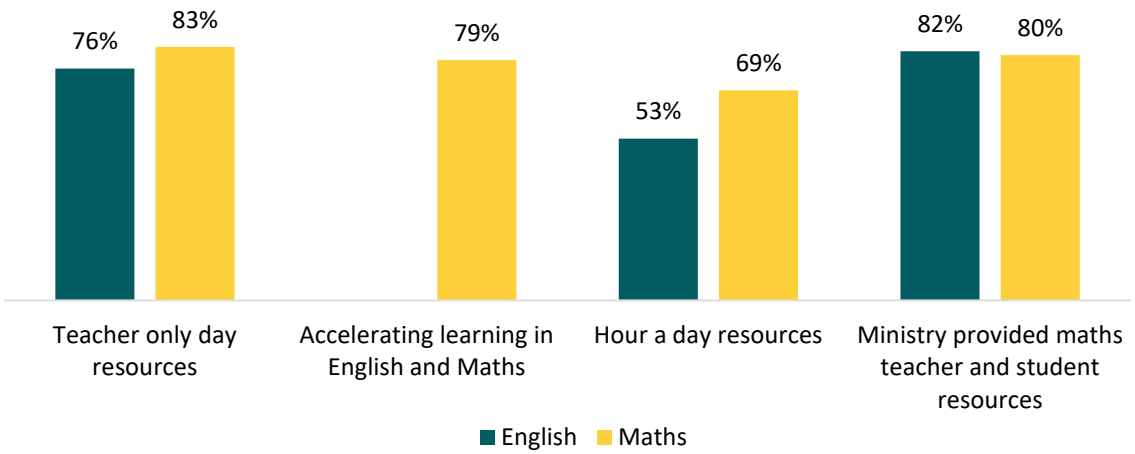



**Figure 60:** *Proportion of leaders who find resources for English or maths useful.*



## c) Impact of resources

**While no individual resource makes a bigger difference, teachers who accessed any resources for maths were nearly 4 times more likely to report changing their teaching practice.**

No one specific resource was found to make the biggest difference to teaching practice, but accessing any of them means teachers are more likely to change how they teach.[ac]

We heard from teachers that the package of maths resources makes it simple to teach the new curriculum. This is because learning is already paced out with lesson plans provided so that they can pick these up and apply them in the classroom. This is reinforced by students telling us that their workbook is the focus of their maths classes, and they like that there are options for them to keep working on more advanced problems when they finish ahead of other classmates.

The resources provide suggestions of what teachers could be doing in each lesson. We heard from teachers that they rely heavily on resources to support their teaching and planning, especially where they are not as confident in the material. This was confirmed by our observations, where we saw teachers using the maths classroom resources to guide their classes. We saw, and heard from teachers, that they do not always understand if or how the resources map to the curriculum.

Some teachers are using resources exactly as prescribed, even when they have questions about the sequencing in them. While some teachers are adapting them to their classroom, many other teachers told us they are unsure where they could adapt what was in the textbook, or what must be taught exactly as it was presented.

We heard from both teachers and students that, while it is changing how they teach, the strong reliance on resources can make it complex when moving between schools. For students, some components that have not yet been covered in their old school are already covered in their new school, which makes it difficult to catch up. For teachers, it could be a challenge to shift between different resources, as this means adjusting to new lesson plans and approaches.

ac We used a logistic regression, OR 3.94; p< 0.01.

## 5) Where are there challenges?

### Accessing guidance and resources is challenging in small or rural schools.

Encouragingly, just under four in five leaders (79 percent) of small schools report they know what to do to implement the changes in their school, but this is less than the nearly nine in ten leaders (89 percent) in large schools. Leaders in small schools are also less likely than those in large schools to have a plan or have someone to lead the delivery of the plan to implement the new curriculum. Just over eight in ten rural school leaders (84 percent) report knowing what to do, compared to over nine in ten in urban schools (91 percent).

Teachers and leaders from small schools and rural or isolated schools report being less able to access supports, often due to time limitations among teaching responsibilities. Leaders in small or rural schools tell us it is difficult to release staff to attend PLD. Isolated and rural schools may only have access to PLD that is not at the right level, is online, or is a long travel distance away.

> "[To attend PLD] we cannot leave the school with beginning teachers or relievers in charge. It is hard for sole charge Principals to attend PLD during school hours."
>
> **RURAL SCHOOL LEADER**

> "The one open PLD offered by the maths resource provider was on the same day as the triathlon, and it was hard to find relievers."
>
> **RURAL SCHOOL TEACHER**

> "Teachers in rural and isolated schools often face long travel times for teacher development, increasing pressure on classroom practice and overreliance on online delivery. Much of this online teacher development lacks interactivity and engagement that impacts how effective it is."
>
> **ERO, *TEACHING THE TEACHERS: HOW EFFECTIVE IS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT?***

When leaders of small schools did access PLD, guides and resources, they found them useful. We heard that some of the PLD application processes require a minimum of 20 teacher registrations from a school to be eligible to have a PLD facilitator on site, which is not feasible for small schools that only have a few teachers on staff. Some schools told us they work around this by partnering with other small schools in the area to coordinate and host the onsite PLD – but this takes time and effort.

> "Our biggest challenge at the moment is getting relievers to release teachers and time to process resources so that they are organised for use by staff."
>
> LEADER

### Not all teachers are clear yet on what structured literacy approaches are, and therefore there may be challenges with the fidelity of how it is being implemented.

Leaders told us that different PLD providers have different views of the core components of English and maths, and the strategies used to teach them. To manage this, leaders told us they support teachers to contextualise what they learn in PLD in their school. They put effort into agreeing on common practices and ensuring that teachers have consistent messages, especially if teachers shift between schools or receive PLD from different providers. We heard that in-school PLD sessions are useful for this purpose.

> "The best thing about having that time was the fact that the three teachers could be together to talk about what we were going to do."
>
> TEACHER

### Teachers report needing more support to teach maths.

Concerningly, many teachers may not be able to help students 'catch up' to the expected level for maths. ERO found teachers are less confident teaching the more complex components of the maths learning area. This is true historically; international research shows that in 2023, nearly half of Year 4 teachers were only 'moderately confident' at teaching any strand of the maths learning area.[38] For teachers of Year 5 students, just over nine in ten (91 percent) were very well prepared to teach number, but this drops to just under three in five (56 percent) for teaching algebra.

Teachers and leaders both shared with us their concerns about some teachers' ability to teach the refreshed maths learning area, as some teachers struggle with maths themselves. We heard about teachers sharing their lack of confidence with their students and avoiding teaching some aspects of the curriculum.

Because the change in what and how number is taught is greater than the changes in other components of maths, and teachers have greater confidence to teach number, some may be prioritising adapting their practice for number, over other aspects of maths.

### Teachers report being unclear how to help students 'catch up' to the new curriculum expectations, extend more able students' learning, or teach multi-year classes.

As highlighted in Part 7, teachers are moving quickly to implement changes, but many are still gaining familiarity with the new curriculum and lack the confidence to adapt it effectively for students at different levels. We frequently heard that teachers are concerned about how to meet students' needs when students have a wide range of knowledge and abilities. Teachers told us the gaps between each phase in the curriculum have become larger.

> "Students are expected to have prior knowledge, but the levels moved – gaps are bigger... [This] means having to move through lots of different groups in one hour."
>
> **TEACHER**

Many teachers also want to know how to support students who need extra support. Some teachers share that they remain unsure how best to bring students up to where they should be using the strict structure of what they believe is expected of them under the new curriculum.

> "I need help with support for remedial maths learning/help in accelerating learning for those well below in particular."
>
> **TEACHER**

While the evidence-based strategies used in the new curriculum are effective for neurodivergent and disabled students, teachers and leaders report they need more guidance to know how they can adapt their teaching for neurodivergent or disabled students. They want further guidance on when and how to escalate support for students who need additional help and more resources to enable this.

> "My youngest was diagnosed with dyslexia. For me, structured literacy has been fantastic in giving him the strategies and tools to encode and decode... I have seen him try to pick up a book and sit down with it, as a parent, that is pleasing to see."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

> "My son is autistic which makes it difficult to get him to sit with the other kids and do schoolwork. However, from what I have heard from his teachers and seen in his reports and what he brings home, he is at his level and even a bit higher, especially with his maths."
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

Some teachers expressed uncertainty about how to apply the new curriculum when their class includes students from multiple year levels. For example, some who teach students ranging from Years 0-8 shared that strategies they previously relied on are no longer viable, based on their understanding of the new expectations. This includes navigating the balance between whole-class instruction and targeted support for small groups – an area where many feel they need clearer guidance.

> "[There are challenges in] how to structure year group lessons across multi-level classrooms, ensuring that students have their 'gaps' filled before building age-appropriate knowledge and skills, how to keep a track of where students are at in each year group and track assessments."
>
> **LEADER**

### Teachers and leaders may need support to move from quick implementation to deeper, sustainable change.

There is a wide variety of guidance, resources and PLD available for leaders and teachers to support them to implement the curriculum changes, and these are widely accessed. Leaders and teachers have 'bought in' to the changes, especially the greater clarity around what to teach. Their desire to do what is expected of them, means they are eager to get started. We saw that schools that have adopted structured literacy approaches earlier need different support and guidance than those that are just starting. The supports leaders and teachers are using enable them to make quick changes to their practice, and the impacts of this on students are already being seen. As teachers and leaders move through their implementation journey, the kinds of support they need are likely to change.

Understandably, given their enthusiasm to get started, teachers and leaders pay less attention to the things that are designed to support their understanding of the theory and practice that sits behind the change, and to implement the change in a strategic and sustainable way. They also do not engage as much with the things that require greater interpretation before action, which means they may need further help to move from quick implementation, to embed and sustain the changes.

## Conclusion

Teachers are well supported by their leaders and many are accessing supports. Guides and resources are helping to change teaching practices, though greater clarity is needed about which resources and guides are most useful to spend time engaging with. PLD is most accessed and highly valued by teachers and leaders. They report it is particularly useful when it is adapted to the school context. Although the supports available are very useful to teachers, and are helping to drive change, there are inconsistencies across materials and in how accessible they are. This results in the positive impacts of some supports not being realised.

# **Part 9:** What is happening for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa?

Most leaders and teachers report they view the redesigned Te Marautanga o Aotearoa positively, appreciating the structure of the new wāhanga ako and the strong alignment between Rangaranga Reo ā–Tā and Poutama Pāngarau. However, implementation is still at an early stage, and kura and rumaki face added challenges in accessing PLD and support.

While the guidance provided is generally high quality, applying it in multi-level classrooms with varied reo proficiency can be difficult. The biggest barrier is access to PLD, resources and ongoing support. Both in-person and online delivery options often fall short for smaller or geographically isolated kura. Given the complexity of rumaki contexts, more tailored support and guidance could help accelerate and strengthen implementation.

This part outlines:

1) how kura and rumaki are engaging with the changes
2) how well supported kura and rumaki are
3) what is going well.

## What we found: an overview

**It is still early days for kura and rumaki. While there is general support for the changes, leaders and teachers report challenges accessing available supports and adapting them to their unique contexts.**

Some kura and rumaki are teaching The New Zealand Curriculum, some are teaching Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, and some use a combination of the two. Kura are more likely to use Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and rumaki are more likely to use a combination or the New Zealand Curriculum in translation.

While positive about the support they have received, as at Term 2, 2025, leaders and teachers report some significant barriers to accessing the PLD, guidance and resources they need to implement the changes.

**Leaders shared that PLD, guidance, and resources for Māori-medium provision do not necessarily reflect the breadth of the settings students are learning in. This means there is little change in what and how students are being taught.**

Teachers in rumaki told us they find it especially challenging. They often translate and adapt English-medium PLD, guidance, and resources for their classes, as they have greater access to these.

**Strong leadership and capability are supporting some settings to make it work.**

Experienced leaders told us that where changes have begun, it is because of the capability and experience of both their leaders and teachers.

These findings are set out in more detail below.

## 1) How are kura and rumaki engaging with the changes?

**Teachers and leaders report that, while they teach some or all of the time in te reo Māori, there is a mix of teaching some or all the time from Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, and the New Zealand Curriculum.**

There is limited information held centrally on which curriculums are taught in which kura or rumaki. We heard from teachers and leaders using Te Marautanga o Aotearoa all the time, in combination with The New Zealand Curriculum, or using the New Zealand Curriculum all the time – with bilingual and rumaki units being more likely to use the New Zealand Curriculum or a combination.

In rumaki, leaders and teachers report using varying levels of te reo Māori to teach, regardless of which curriculum they teach. They explained this is partly due to the availability of resources and PLD, and partly due to teacher and student competency in te reo Māori. Some teachers told us that they would use the New Zealand Curriculum in English for maths if it would more accurately reflect the level that their students were at.

Because of this variety in the curriculum(s) used, it is difficult to target resources, professional learning and development (PLD), and other supports appropriately. Better identification of which schools and settings use Te Marautanga o Aotearoa would make this easier, which will be addressed through further data gathering in Terms 3 and 4, 2025.

**At this stage of implementation we heard that although there is support for the changes, there is little change yet in what and how students are being taught.**

We heard that leaders appreciated the clarity of the new wāhanga ako, the clearer split in tūārere (levels) and the greater structure in the approach to numeracy and literacy.

Most teachers we spoke to in rumaki and kura are willing to change what and how they teach, but at the time of data collection in Term 2, 2025, many report they do not yet have the information, resources, or time they need to make the changes. They are prioritising building teacher and leader knowledge of what is required before fully implementing the changes.

> "Once staff got started we actually enjoyed it."
>
> **LEADER/TUMUAKI**

Many leaders and teachers cited challenges around having sufficient time to understand and implement the changes. Across Term 4 2024, and Term 1 2025, nearly one in four of the kura and rumaki leaders who responded said they needed more time for implementation. Some leaders report that they are delaying implementation of the changes to pāngarau until they have embedded the changes to Te Reo Rangatira.

In a small number of cases, there is some resistance to change. This is particularly the case when leaders and teachers see current practices as working well for their students.

Differences in access to resources, professional learning, and clear guidance mean that the scope, sequencing, and depth of what is taught in practice vary significantly, despite the greater specificity in the redesigned curriculum. Rumaki appear to be experiencing a slower rollout compared to English-medium due to additional challenges in accessing resources and guidance, particularly for in-person PLD. A few leaders report that some guidance has prompted a shift away from whānau-centred flexibility towards more prescriptive delivery.

### Little has been communicated so far to whānau about curriculum changes.

Whānau knowledge of curriculum changes and teaching priorities is strongly shaped by kura and rumaki communication practices. Where kura and rumaki have established ways of engaging with whānau (like hui-a-whānau, pānui and digital updates), whānau are informed about what children are being taught, and how they are being taught. Leaders unpack information for whānau, to make it clear what it means for their context.

Where kura or rumaki do not have a variety of ways to engage with whānau, we heard they often provide information only when reporting on students' progress and achievement.

In many of the kura and rumaki that we talked to, leaders and teachers had not communicated the changes to the curriculum, as they were not yet at the stage of implementation – they intend to do so once they are clear on the changes.

## 2) How well supported are kura and rumaki?

**While positive about the support they have received, leaders and teachers report some barriers to access the PLD, guidance and resources they need to implement the changes.**

### Professional Learning and Development

When they were able to access PLD, teachers and leaders were generally positive about the clarity that it brings and the expert knowledge of the providers, although there were indications of some variation across providers.

Leaders appreciated the alignment between Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā and the new Te Reo Rangatira curriculum. We heard from Kura ā Iwi that the support of their peak body was helpful in enabling them to understand and begin to implement the changes. Ministry gathered data shows that 79 percent of teachers post-PLD indicate that it is valuable for their own teaching practice, and 71 percent report they are confident to use evidence and data they gather to identify students who might need additional support.[ad]

> "It was good to see how the Ministry ... has taken on board the science and evidence-based approach to the reading brain and implemented this into practice for Reo Maaori."
>
> **TEACHER/KAIAKO**

> "The clear scope and sequence of lessons. It makes it easier to see what I should be teaching and where to go next."
>
> **TEACHER/KAIAKO**

Leaders and teachers report some barriers to accessing PLD. Many of the kura and rumaki are smaller and geographically isolated. Even though the Ministry is funding release time, the limited availability of local relievers with the required reo proficiency presents some practical barriers. Attending PLD in person creates burdens in terms of travel for some of the more isolated kura or rumaki.

Smaller kura or rumaki can face challenges in terms of single-person dependencies. We heard that one kura was delayed in its implementation due to extended leave for one key teacher.

In some cases, we heard that PLD has been short, with online sessions only. Reliable broadband connectivity is a further issue for some kura and rumaki which limited the accessibility of online PLD.

ad Statistics provided from the Ministry of Education for Term 3 2025.

Since the Term 2 data collection for this report, Ministry of Education data shows an uptick in PLD applications for both Rangaranga Reo āTā and Poutama Pāngarau, which can be expected to build teacher and leader confidence and capability to make progress on implementation. In Term 3, 481 teachers have completed training in Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā, with a further 448 currently in training, and 237 having applied. The Ministry's data also shows that in Term 2025, 752 teachers have applied for Poutama Pāngarau PLD.

### Resources and Guidance

Kura and rumaki cited issues around the availability and accessibility of resources in Te Reo Māori. Some mentioned wanting more clear and timely information from the Ministry around the overall timeline, and PLD timelines and providers.

This information is largely available online, as mentioned above, but this was not necessarily the way that kura and rumaki are most easily able to engage.

> "There are no hard copies of the marau, you can only get it online."
>
> **LEADER/TUMUAKI**

Some kura in rural settings had difficulty with connectivity to access online resources. We heard that some physical resources arrived out of order, or in insufficient amounts for the number of ākonga.

Teachers and leaders did appreciate the resources when they accessed them. The Ministry reported that Tumuaki were excited to engage with the Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā resources at a meeting with Principals. Many commented to them on the high quality of the resources, the comprehensive nature of the content and the clear links to second language acquisition.

> "Pukapuka (books) are clear, easy to read and follow. Rauemi kāri (flashcards), bright & colourful, tamariki love kāri arapū reta (alphabet cards)."
>
> **TEACHER/KAIAKO**

Having more up-to-date and reliable information on which kura and rumaki are teaching Te Marautanga o Aotearoa would support the more efficient targeting of resources and support.

**Leaders shared that PLD, guidance, and resources do not necessarily reflect the breadth of the settings students are learning in.**

Rumaki and kura leaders tell us that because of their size, most students who learn in te reo Māori are in mixed-year level classes. There is also a mix of abilities within a year level, and many teachers in rumaki work between the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. In addition, in rumaki, both teachers and students have varying levels of fluency in te reo Māori.

Rumaki leaders and teachers report that the resources and guidance they accessed tend to be targeted at single-year teaching, in one curriculum, and one language only.

We heard there is a need for more tailored guidance, PLD, and resources to support teachers in applying Te Marautanga o Aotearoa within their context, in particular, for those in multi-year teaching environments with varying levels of reo proficiency.

In addition, it would be helpful to improve the accessibility of guidance, PLD, and resources – ensuring the language is clear and the methods of distribution meet the needs of all schools, including those who are geographically remote or have barriers to connectivity.

### Teachers in rumaki told us they find it especially challenging. They often have to translate English-medium PLD and resources for their class.

As part of English-medium schools, teachers in rumaki often only get to participate in the PLD designed for their English-medium colleagues, and access the resources provided to them, rather than the broader ecosystem of support aligned to Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. Unlike those kura who have the institutional support and network of their peak body, they do not often have other teachers to work with, to plan and implement the changes. Because of this, we heard rumaki teachers frequently adapt English-medium resources, translating and adapting them to use in their classes, to fit their context and the language abilities of both teachers and students.

Rumaki leaders and teachers reported prioritising implementing the changes to the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum as they felt they had more guidance and it matched what their colleagues were doing in the English-medium school.

> “Having to navigate both reo pākehā and reo Māori when working through her mahi kāinga [homework] is challenging. But we are both resilient to work through it as I believe it will benefit her in the long run.”
>
> **PARENT/WHĀNAU**

It would be helpful to build up a clearer picture centrally of the rates of use of the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa in rumaki contexts. The context of curriculum implementation is more complex for these settings. More dedicated and accessible guidance and support for bilingual and immersion contexts would help these teachers and leaders to navigate this complexity. Teachers in rumaki settings (or sole teacher kura) need specific support to enable them to make the changes. A further review to understand the specific needs and challenges for rumaki settings would help to target this.

## 3) What is going well?

**Strong leadership and capability are supporting some settings to make it work**
**Experienced leaders told us that where changes have begun, it is because of the capability of both their leaders and teachers.**

In surveys, as of Term 1 2025, 87 percent of kura and rumaki respondents reported that they had a specific person in place for leading the implementation of the redesigned wāhanga ako.

Kura and rumaki leaders told us that where schools have strong and experienced leadership, leaders manage the information flow to teachers. They set a plan for implementing the change and manage the pace of change for their staff.

They find ways for their teachers to learn and support each other, both within their school and with others in their community.

> "We have resilient teachers... As leaders we try to mitigate outside pressures, our teachers feel pressure, and I honour them."
>
> **LEADER/TUMUAKI**

Leaders and teachers would benefit from further opportunities to share planning, exchange resources, and learn from one another, including mentoring of newer leaders by experienced leaders – this is especially important for rumaki and kura motuhake leaders and teachers who do not have the support of a national body.

## Conclusion

There are some positive signs for the implementation of the redesigned Te Marautanga o Aotearoa – most leaders and teachers we spoke to indicate that they appreciate the guidance and structure of the new wāhanga ako, and the close alignment of Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā and Poutama Pāngarau.

However, for many at the time of data collection, implementation remains in its early stages. Kura and rumaki face some additional challenges in accessing PLD, guidance and support. The quantity and quality of available guidance is good, although applying it to multi-year level classrooms with a range of reo proficiency can be a challenge for some. The biggest gap we have heard is around access, with both in-person and online delivery not meeting the unique needs of smaller and geographically isolated kura.

The complexity of the curriculum context for rumaki also suggests that particular tailored support and guidance for these leaders and teachers could help with the speed and fidelity of implementation.

# **Part 10:** What lessons have we learned about effective curriculum change?

As part of developing this report, ERO looked at what worked well for recent changes to the curriculum, and what other areas could use additional focus. This part includes key lessons to support implementation of future changes, drawn from our National Reviews as well as from national and international evidence, and feedback we have received.

We are seeing early positive impacts following recent curriculum changes in schools nationally. Nearly all English-medium schools are making use of the new English and maths learning areas, and we are seeing increased engagement from students in these subjects.

By reflecting on what was particularly successful through this change, we can identify learnings to inform future curriculum changes.

For our lessons learned, we reviewed what we found through this review, as well as:

- previous ERO National Review reports, including *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025) and *Ready, set, teach: How prepared and supported are new teachers?* (2024)[39]
- other New Zealand evidence
- international evidence
- feedback from our other surveys, the Education sector and other experts.

## What we found: an overview

In this part, we have identified three key lessons learned:

1) **A well-designed curriculum change package can be highly impactful** in igniting change across all schools.
2) Building **teacher capability is essential for successful curriculum change** which makes a difference for students.
3) **Tailored approaches for schools with greater challenges are key** to generate change where it is needed most.

Each of these lessons learned is supported by additional insights into what can support the successful implementation of future curriculum change.

## 1) A well-designed curriculum change package can be highly impactful

The success of this curriculum change is due to providing a whole, well-aligned package. Curriculum change should be framed by a clear purpose and expectations for schools, teachers and students. To generate maximum impact, curriculum change should be communicated widely and accompanied by high-quality supports and resources.

### A clear purpose is key for successful curriculum change

Having a clarity of purpose for curriculum change is key to implementation. It is key to unite around a shared understanding of what is being implemented, how it will be implemented, and why it matters.[40] Ensuring that the purpose is understood by families, schools, and the wider community supports leads to buy-in, and to better results.

The recent changes to the curriculums were clear about their purpose – to improve student achievement. The changes were built around more coherent and purpose-driven structure, which supported implementation.

### Effective, cohesive communication is needed to support implementation.

A key reason that delivering curriculum change as part of a package of supports is so successful is because it enables a coordinated approach. We found that it is possible to reach all schools if there is a centrally designed programme and clear expectations for all schools.

Diverse schools and communities participate when they understand what is happening, and why. To do this, it is important to ensure communications are clear about what the changes are to the curriculum, as well as the evidence base for those changes. This is something that should be focused on more for future change packages, both for the education sector and for the community. Parents and whānau told us they would like more communication from schools and school leaders told us that they would like more targeted resources to support this.

### Signalling and sequencing of change are important.

A curriculum change package works best when it supported by a well-planned sequence of changes, and the right support is available at the right time. This staged approach is supporting schools to implement the changes in a practical, achievable way. School leaders play a critical role in signalling and sequencing the changes in their school, so teachers can embed and sustain the changes in their practice, without being overwhelmed.

The refreshed national curriculums are being introduced in stages across subjects and year groups. The Ministry of Education communicated the changes to schools and made a number of supports and resources available to support implementation. This approach saw schools across the country implementing the new curriculums at a high rate, with significant variation in whether schools were based on the socio-economic status of the community they are in.

### Strong leadership can drive change in schools.

Schools make change best when supported by a leader who is responsible for driving the curriculum change and setting clear expectations. Leadership is key to managing changes to the curriculum within schools. Leaders can set a plan for implementing the change and manage the pace of change for their staff.

We heard that implementation of English and maths changes is working well when supported by leadership. While school leaders and teachers are making the required changes and accessing the PLD and other supports to help them do it, we heard some school leaders put significant effort into unpacking and understanding different information sources, for example, to know how to access PLD or what they need to do and when. Teachers in Māori-medium schools also told us that where schools have strong and experienced leadership, leaders manage the information flow to teachers.

### Change has an impact when supported by evidence and is suitable for New Zealand's students.

Curriculum change needs to be evidence-informed, right for the setting, and feasible to implement.[41] The recent curriculum changes have emphasised the importance of knowledge base and progress outcomes with the intention of making expectations clear.

Evidence shows that specific changes with clear instruction have been shown to be easier to implement than vague changes.[42] We can see that recent changes, such as the requirement to spend an hour a day on reading, writing and maths, has resulted in an increase in time spent on those subjects. We heard from teachers that the increased time spent on these subjects is because of the clear resources for maths and structured literacy they have been receiving.

### It is important to reinforce and embed changes through supports and resources.

Embedding change is necessary to ensure what is learned sticks. As well as providing training and resources to support better practice, we found it was valuable to set aside time to embed learning (such as through teacher-only-days).

Evidence shows that having an action plan to follow makes it more likely that a teacher will use a technique they have learned.[43] There is a risk that in trying to implement things quickly, teachers and leaders do not come back to do the work needed to understand the depth of the curriculum, make continued changes to their teaching practice, or know where and how they can adapt. Having resources and processes in place to embed and reinforce changes made can limit this risk.

## 2) Teacher capability is key to successful curriculum change

Quality teaching is the biggest driver of student success and is more impactful than other things, including prior student achievement and class size, on students' outcomes.[44] Teacher capability to support curriculum changes is therefore significant for ensuring successful curriculum implementation.

### Teachers need to understand the purpose of changes.

Teachers are more likely to engage with and apply new learning when they understand its purpose, see its relevance, and feel supported to succeed.[45] Engagement with schools and the wider education sector is essential to ensure that teachers understand the purpose of changes and can support implementation. Providing resources and development which is tailored to the curriculum change can support successful implementation. We heard that it was particularly helpful when teachers are supported to apply what they have learned to their specific context.[46]

### High-quality professional learning and development (PLD) can build capability and motivation.

Teaching quality is not fixed and can be improved through effective PLD.[47] PLD can change practice in schools if when it builds knowledge, motivates teachers to use what they learn, develops teaching techniques, and provides structures and strategies to embed good practice. We also know that PLD is more likely to succeed if it is aligned with the needs and strategic priorities of the school, as well as supported by leadership.[48]

ERO recently published a report following their National Review into PLD for teachers, which included specific review of English and maths PLD to support the curriculum changes, and found that it was particularly successful in embedding change.[49] Most teachers are using what they have learnt in recent English PLD and are seeing improvement in student outcomes. Nearly three-quarters of teachers (71 percent) told us that they use it every day.[50] We heard positive feedback on recent maths PLD as well, with nine out of ten teachers (91 percent) telling us that they found it somewhat or very useful.

### Provide targeted support to teachers where it is most needed.

Where teachers lack confidence, knowledge or capability it is harder to change practice without also building foundational capability. We found that many teachers lack the confidence to teach maths, which reflects that additional targeted support may be required. We saw in this review that when teachers lack confidence, implementation of curriculum changes is slower – for example we found that teachers are less confident in teaching maths, and we also found that there is not the expected level of shift to more complex components of maths as students get older.

We heard that resources developed to support the implementation of changes in English and maths learning areas were useful, providing support where it is needed. Teachers told us through this review that the science of learning guidance helped them understand why they needed to use a range of strategies, and that these strategies were being used particularly by teachers of younger students.

As well as general resources for delivering the curriculum for all students, teachers need support to be able to adapt it for students who are excelling or struggling. This includes how to adapt general practice to target students where they are at. This is also key for teachers of multi-level classes. We heard that these teachers are also concerned about how to meet students' needs within a year level, when students have a wide range of knowledge and abilities. This is particularly challenging for mixed-year level classrooms that sit between the phases, such as Years 3–4.

## 3) We need tailored approaches for schools with greater challenges

As well as providing general support and resources for schools implementing curriculum changes, tailored approaches are needed to deliver change in schools facing particular challenges. How change is implemented is particularly important for schools facing socio-economic disadvantage.[51] Tailoring implementation can include advice on how to adapt general practice for particular students, schools, or communities as well as targeted support and resources.

### Parent engagement can support implementation of change.

Engagement, and particularly high-quality engagement, really matters for implementation of change in the Education sector.[52] We learned through this review that tailored communication to communities from trusted sources, such as from teachers and schools, was most successful.

Encouragingly, we saw that implementation of English and maths learning area changes happened equally across a range of communities. An additional focus area for future change would be additional support for parents and whānau. We found that with the recent curriculum change, in particular changes to the maths learning area, there was a lack of confidence from some parents in how to support their children with their learning. We heard from parents and whānau that this is something they would like more guidance on.

### With support, it is possible to achieve the biggest shift in schools facing challenges.

Schools facing challenges can be supported to realise the benefits of curriculum change. These supports can work well when provided through a national change package, as we have seen through the English and maths learning area changes.

Through this review, we saw some positive progress in schools that face challenges. We found that teachers serving in lower socio-economic communities are more likely to have increased time spent on maths than those in higher socio-economic communities. We also saw that, regardless of school type, size or location, schools that have implemented the new curriculum are teaching the new content similarly.

### Small and isolated schools need a targeted approach to support change.

We heard from teachers, school leaders, and the wider community that these schools need a bespoke approach to ensuring that curriculum changes can be well implemented.

While implementation from schools is high overall, small schools are slower to implement than larger schools. We found that small and rural schools are less likely to have someone leading implementation of curriculum changes or to have a plan in place to implement these changes.

Teachers and leaders from small schools report being less able to access available supports, often due to having less time to focus on change, but found them useful when they were able to access them. Additional support could be useful for these schools in future implementation.

## Conclusion

This review, as well as previous ERO National Reviews and other evidence, can provide learnings for how to successfully implement curriculum change in the future. We learned that a well–designed curriculum change package can be highly impactful in igniting change across all schools. We also learned that building teacher capability is essential for successful curriculum change which makes a difference for students. Finally, we learned that tailored approaches for schools with greater challenges are key to generate change where it is needed most. These lessons learned can help to contextualise the findings of this review, and inform our recommendations.

# **Part 11:** Recommendations

The questions that we asked as part of this review led to **31** key findings and **3** key lessons learned. Based on these findings and lessons learned, we have identified **12** recommendations that will improve how current and future curriculum change is implemented. This section sets out our findings, lessons learned, and recommendations.

Literacy and numeracy are foundational skills that allow students to access and engage in all other subjects. Strong literacy and numeracy in primary school sets students up to succeed in the later years of school, and in life beyond school. Significant work is needed to lift New Zealand students' achievement in reading, writing and maths. The Government has introduced a series of actions to address poor student achievement, including changes to both our national curriculums; the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.

The Education Review Office (ERO), in partnership with the Ministry of Education, wanted to know how the implementation is going and lessons we can learn from the early stages of implementation.

ERO was commissioned to review the implementation of the English and Te Reo Rangatira, and mathematics and statistics and pāngarau curriculum changes, and the early impacts of these changes, with a focus on the actions schools are taking, student progress and achievement, and informing future decisions.

In undertaking this review, ERO drew on evidence from a range of data and analysis, including:

- a review of national and international literature
- administrative data from the Ministry of Education, including phonics assessments and termly check-in responses
- ERO's own data collection, including over 6300 responses to our surveys, 500 interviews, and 54 classroom observations.

## Key findings

From this evidence, we identified 31 key findings across the following areas:

1) What is being taught in English and maths?
2) How are English and maths being taught?
3) What has been the change in student outcomes?
4) What has changed for parents?
5) How are schools delivering the changes?
6) How well supported are schools and teachers to make the changes?

**Table 9:** *A summary of the findings by area.*

| Area 1: **What** is being taught in English and maths? | |
|---|---|
| **Finding 1** | Already, nearly all schools (98 percent) have started using the new English learning area, and nearly all teachers are covering the full range of content. They spend more time on the foundations, and less on more complex skills. |
| **Finding 2** | Nearly all teachers (more than 90 percent) report consistently using some type of structured literacy approach in junior classes. |
| **Finding 3** | Nearly all schools (98 percent) have started using the new maths learning area. Concerningly, so far teachers focus on number, and all other components are taught less. |
| **Finding 4** | In English, what is taught at different year levels is what is expected – more complex components are appropriately taught more for older students. |
| **Finding 5** | In maths, there is not yet the expected level of shift to more complex components as students get older. |
| **Finding 6** | Importantly, teachers across all school types, sizes and locations are teaching the components of the refreshed curriculum. |

| Area 2: **How** are English and maths being taught? | |
|---|---|
| **Finding 7** | Most teachers have quickly changed how they teach English (88 percent) and maths (85 percent), using the range of evidence-backed teaching strategies that are part of the curriculum changes. |
| **Finding 8** | Almost two-thirds of teachers (64 percent) report that structured literacy approaches have already changed their teaching practices a lot. |
| **Finding 9** | Changes in teaching practice are happening consistently. Teachers across a range of different schools (type, size, rurality, etc.) report they are using the same techniques from the new curriculum to teach English and maths. |
| **Finding 10** | Across both English and maths, teachers of younger students (Years 0–3) use the science of learning strategies more. |

| Area 3: What has been the change in **student outcomes**? | |
|---|---|
| **Finding 11** | It is still early days, but there are positive signs that students' achievement in English and maths is improving. |
| **Finding 12** | Student engagement in English has improved, and in maths, it has improved more. Nine out of ten students now enjoy learning in English and maths. |
| **Finding 13** | Three out of four teachers (75 percent) report that structured literacy approaches have already improved literacy for most students. |
| **Finding 14** | Teachers are more likely to report improvements in maths achievement for Years 7–8 students, and improved engagement in both English and maths for younger students. |

| Area 4: What has changed for **parents**? | |
|---|---|
| **Finding 15** | Only half of parents know the curriculum has changed, but most know how their child's school teaches reading, writing, and maths. They also know about their child's progress. |
| **Finding 16** | Nine in ten parents (93 percent) know how to help their child with reading, writing and maths at home, and work with their child on their learning. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Finding 17** | Encouragingly, parents from different backgrounds have similar knowledge of what is happening, how their child is progressing, and the help they can provide at home. |
| **Finding 18** | Parents are less confident helping their children with maths and would like more guidance from their child's school to make sure they're supporting the changes. |

| **Area 5: How are schools <u>delivering</u> the changes?** | |
|---|---|
| **Finding 19** | Around one third of teachers report that they have increased the time spent on reading, writing and maths. Around two-thirds of teachers do an hour a day every day for reading (60 percent) and maths (67 percent) and almost all teachers do an hour a day for reading, writing and maths at least four days a week. |
| **Finding 20** | Most schools have not yet made significant changes to assessment for English or maths, as assessment tools have not yet been updated to match the new curriculum expectations. |
| **Finding 21** | Positively, teachers in schools serving lower socio-economic communities spend more time on explicit instruction and are more likely to have increased their time on maths than those in higher socio-economic communities. |
| **Finding 22** | Younger students have seen a greater increase in time spent on maths than older students following the introduction of one hour a day. |
| **Finding 23** | Small schools and rural schools are less likely to have someone leading implementation, or to have a plan for implementing the changes. |

| Area 6: How well supported are schools and teachers to make the changes? | |
|---|---|
| **Finding 24** | Most schools are well placed to make the changes, with structures and plans in place. |
| **Finding 25** | More school leaders are supporting teachers to make the changes to maths, than to English. |
| **Finding 26** | It is early days for kura and rumaki. While they generally support the changes, leaders and teachers report challenges accessing the supports and using them in their specific settings. |
| **Finding 27** | Around eight in ten teachers have accessed recent PLD. Both teachers and leaders report that PLD for what to teach is the most useful. |
| **Finding 28** | The recent English PLD in primary schools has been very impactful. Most teachers are using what they have learnt, using it often, and seeing improvement in student outcomes. |
| **Finding 29** | Not all teachers are clear yet on what structured literacy approaches are, and therefore, there may be challenges with how it is being implemented. |
| **Finding 30** | Guidance and resources for English and maths are making a big impact on teachers who have accessed them. |
| **Finding 31** | Teachers are not yet clear how to help students ‘catch up’ to the new curriculum expectations, extend more able students’ learning, or teach multi-year classes. |

## Lessons learned

For this report, our findings are supported by a set of key 'lessons learned'. By reflecting on what was particularly successful through implementation of the English and maths learning area changes, and where there have been particular challenges, we identified lessons to inform future curriculum change.

We identified three high–level lessons learned:

1) A well–designed curriculum change package can be highly impactful in igniting change across all schools.
2) Building teacher capability is essential for successful curriculum change, which makes a difference for students.
3) Tailored approaches for schools with greater challenges are key to generate change where it is needed most.

Each lesson learned is supported by a number of insights, which are summarised in the following tables.

**Table 10:** *Summary of the lessons learned.*

| 1) A well–designed curriculum change package can be highly impactful in igniting change across all schools. |
|---|
| **A clear purpose is key to successful curriculum change**. Ensuring that the purpose is understood by families, schools, and the wider community supports leads to buy in, and to better results. |
| **Effective, cohesive communication is needed to support implementation**. It is possible to reach all schools if there is a centrally designed programme and clear expectations for all schools. |
| **Signalling and sequencing of change are important**. A curriculum change package works best when it is supported by a well–planned sequence of changes, and the right support is available at the right time. |
| **Strong leadership can drive change in schools**. Schools make change best when supported by a leader who is responsible for driving the curriculum change and setting clear expectations. |
| **Change has an impact when supported by evidence and tailored for New Zealand's students**. Curriculum changes work if they are evidence–informed, right for the setting, and feasible to implement. |
| **It is important to reinforce and embed changes through supports and resources**. It is important to provide training and resources to support better practice, and set aside time to embed learning. |

**2) Building teacher capability is essential for successful curriculum change, which makes a difference for students.**

**Engagement with schools and the wider education sector is essential** to ensure that teachers understand the purpose of changes and can support implementation.

**High-quality PLD can build capability and motivation**. PLD can change practice in schools when it builds knowledge, motivates teachers to use what they learn, develops teaching techniques, and provides structures and strategies to embed good practice.

**Provide targeted support to teachers where it is most needed**. This includes building foundational capability where teachers lack confidence or knowledge.

**3) Tailored approaches for schools with greater challenges are key to generate change where it is needed most.**

**Parent engagement can support implementation of change**. Tailored communication to communities from trusted sources, such as from teachers and schools, can be the most successful.

**With support, it is possible to achieve the biggest shift in schools facing challenges**. These supports can work well when provided through a national change package.

**Small and isolated schools need a targeted approach to support change**. These schools may need additional support to ensure that curriculum changes can be well implemented.

## Recommendations

ERO used these findings and key lessons learned to make 12 recommendations across six areas:

1) Continue doing what works.
2) Strengthen teachers' capability in maths.
3) Support teachers to enable and extend students appropriately.
4) Ensure support reaches the schools and teachers that most need it.
5) Strengthen and prioritise resources for implementing Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.
6) Embed and sustain the changes.

### Area 1: Continue doing what works

One term in, there is already widespread adoption of the changes, and teachers are changing their practice. Importantly, the range of supports available have meant this is true for a diverse range of schools nationally, and the impacts have reached a broad range of students and parents. It is important we do not lose sight of the elements that have contributed to the successes so far. To help maintain focus on the things that work, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 1:** The Ministry of Education continue to clearly communicate the purpose for the changes.

**Recommendation 2:** The Ministry of Education continue to provide tightly defined, centrally commissioned, high-quality PLD.

**Recommendation 3:** The Ministry of Education continue to provide a package of support for school leaders and teachers, so they know what to do and have the skills and resources to do it.

**Recommendation 4:** The Ministry of Education continue to focus support for schools in low socio-economic communities.

### Area 2: Strengthen teachers' capability in maths

Teachers' capability is critical to students' achievement. Unfortunately, teachers are less confident to teach maths, and students have a greater need for support in maths. To make sure teachers have the capability to improve student achievement in maths, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 5:** The Ministry of Education develop and implement a package of supports for leaders and teachers to raise their capability to teach more complex maths.

## Area 3: Support teachers to enable and extend students appropriately

Teachers' use of the PLD, resources, and guidance shows positive signs of improving student achievement overall. However, teachers are less sure how to enable or extend students' learning, to make sure they succeed. To strengthen teachers' capability to meet the needs of all students, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 6:** The Ministry of Education provide a package of support, including PLD, guidance, and resources, to help leaders and teachers enable students to catch up, or extend their learning.

**Recommendation 7:** The Ministry of Education ensure adequate and appropriate specialist supports are available for students who need it, and teachers have guidance to know when it is needed.

**Recommendation 8:** Initial teacher education should have a strong focus on the teaching practices needed to enable and extend students' learning.

## Area 4: Ensure support reaches the schools and teachers that most need it

The package of support has meant that schools across sizes, socio-economic communities and locations are using the components and strategies of the new curriculum. The targeted focus on schools in lower socio-economic communities has meant that these schools have made the changes similarly to others. Unfortunately, small and isolated schools have additional challenges in making the changes. To better support these schools, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 9:** The Ministry of Education develop a new model for enabling small or isolated schools to access the PLD and support they need to implement curriculum changes.

## Area 5: Strengthen and prioritise resources for implementing Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

Kura and rumaki are earlier in the process of making the changes to what and how they teach. To help ensure they have the knowledge, skills and resources to do this, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 10:** The Ministry of Education work to increase access and uptake of resources and support for embedding Te Marautanga o Aotearoa changes, especially focusing on tailored supports for pāngarau.

## Area 6: Embed and sustain the changes

It is promising that leaders and teachers have embraced the changes and made significant shifts in what and how they teach. To make sure this progress continues, ERO recommends:

**Recommendation 11:** The Ministry of Education provide guidance to parents, to help them more effectively support their child's maths learning at home.

**Recommendation 12:** ERO and the Ministry of Education continue to monitor schools' implementation of the curriculum changes, to identify and take any action needed to ensure schools can embed and sustain the changes to practice.

# Next steps

The refreshed English and Te Reo Rangatira (Years 0–6) and mathematics, statistics and pāngarau (Years 0–8) curriculums – along with the requirement to spend an hour a day on each of reading, writing and maths – are the initial steps in a large programme to lift New Zealand students' achievement. ERO will continue to work with the Ministry of Education to review how the changes are going and what refinements are needed, as schools continue to embed and sustain these changes. These reviews will also continue to look for lessons to strengthen the implementation of future changes.

# Conclusion

The Government is making significant changes to education in New Zealand. While it is still early in the implementation of the refreshed curriculums, ERO found it is progressing exceptionally well. School leaders and teachers have engaged with the guidance, resources and support, and are making great progress. Nearly all schools have made changes to what and how they teach. Already, teachers, parents and whānau report improvements in students' achievement and engagement.

Based on these findings and lessons learned, we have identified 13 recommendations that will ensure momentum is maintained.

# **Appendix 1:** Māori-medium provision

## What is Māori-medium provision, and why do we have it?

### What is Māori-medium provision in schooling?

Māori language funding levels in schools are based on students being taught at different levels of instruction in te reo Māori. Each level is defined by the proportion of time the student is taught using te reo Māori:

**Table 11:** *Summary of Māori language funding levels in schools by the proportion of time spent teaching using te reo Māori.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Level 1: 81–100%** | Curriculum is taught in Māori for between 20 and up to 25 hours a week |
| **Level 2: 51–80%** | Curriculum is taught in Māori for between 12.5 and up to 20 hours a week |
| **Level 3: 31–50%** | Curriculum is taught in Māori for between 7.5 and up to 12.5 hours a week |
| **Level 4(a): 12–30%** | Curriculum is taught in Māori for between 3 and up to 7.5 hours a week |
| **Level 4(b): >3 hours** | Students are learning te reo Māori as a separate subject for at least 3 hours a week |

In this report, Māori-medium school provision refers to teaching and learning where **te reo Māori is the principal language of instruction for at least 51 percent of the school day** (20–25 hours per week – Level 1 and Level 2 in the table above).

Provision may be delivered by dedicated schools (Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura ā Iwi, or Kura Motuhake), or through bilingual or immersion units (reo rua or rumaki reo) situated within English–medium schools. For simplicity's sake, this report uses the term kura to refer to the first category and rumaki or rumaki reo to refer to the second.

## Why is Māori-medium provision important?

The purpose of Māori-medium provision is to:

- revitalise and sustain te reo Māori as a living, intergenerational language
- embed Māori values, tikanga, and identity at the heart of teaching and learning
- strengthen ākonga cultural identity and deepen their connections to iwi, hapū, and whānau
- provide choice for parents and whānau
- provide academic pathways that integrate Māori ways of knowing with the aspirations of the national education system.

Māori-medium provision has made a substantial contribution to Māori student success – for instance, Māori students in Level 1 settings (taught in Māori 81–100 percent of the time) are more likely to leave school with Level 3 or University Entrance than those in English–medium education (Te Tira Hou 2024 – Ministry of Education).

ERO has also previously published on the successes of Māori–medium education and the conditions that contribute to this success.

The table below shows the number of ākonga Māori learning in these different settings.

**Table 12:** *Number of ākonga Māori learning in Māori–medium provision (Source: Te Tira Hou (2024)).*

| Setting Type | Number of ākonga Māori[ae] |
|---|---|
| Kura Kaupapa Māori<br>*(Kura belonging to Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori, aligned to Te Aho Matua philosophy and curriculum)* | 7,185 |
| Ngā Kura ā Iwi<br>*(Kura belonging to Ngā Kura ā Iwi (NKaI) with a designated iwi character, localised to a specific iwi – and hapū and whānau)* | 4,732 |
| Designated character kura (incl. Kura Motuhake) | 1,204 |
| Rumaki reo units (bilingual and immersion)<br>*(Units situated within English medium schools, where instruction is in te reo Māori for at least 81% of the time)* | 4,902 |
| **Total** | **18,023 *(8.9% of all ākonga Māori)*** |

ae As at 2023.

# **Appendix 2:** What does the refreshed curriculum include?

## English

**Table 13:** *A summary of the changes to the English learning area.*

| English | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **New** | **Old** |
| **Learning Strands** | 1) Oral language<br>2) Reading<br>3) Writing | 1) Making meaning of ideas or information they receive (listening, reading, and viewing);<br>2) Creating meaning for themselves or others (speaking, writing, and presenting). |
| **Progress outcomes** | Understand:<br>→ Communication depends on shared codes and conventions<br>→ Language and literature give us insights into ourselves and others<br>→ The stories of Aotearoa New Zealand are unique and special<br>→ Stories are a source of joy and nourishment<br>→ Literature, language, and texts express, influence, and explore perspectives and ideas<br>Know:<br>→ Text purposes and audiences<br>→ Ideas within, across, and beyond texts<br>→ Features and structures of language<br>Do:<br>→ Comprehending and creating texts<br>→ Critical analysis<br>→ Reading for pleasure<br>→ Connecting through storytelling | Achievement objectives related to:<br>→ text purposes and audiences;<br>→ ideas within language contexts;<br>→ language features that enhance texts;<br>→ the structure and organisation of texts. |

## Mathematics and Statistics

**Table 14:** *A summary of changes to the maths learning area.*

| Mathematics and Statistics | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **New** | **Old** |
| **Learning Strands** | 1) Number<br>2) Algebra<br>3) Measurement<br>4) Geometry<br>5) Statistics<br>6) Probability | 1) Number and algebra<br>2) Geometry and measurement<br>3) Statistics |
| **Progress outcomes** | Understand:<br>→ Patterns and variation<br>→ Logic and reasoning<br>→ Visualisation and application<br>Know:<br>→ Number<br>→ Algebra<br>→ Measurement<br>→ Geometry<br>→ Statistics<br>→ Probability<br>Do:<br>→ Investigating situations<br>→ Representing situations<br>→ Connecting situations<br>→ Generalising findings<br>→ Explaining and justifying findings | Number and algebra:<br>→ Number strategies<br>→ Number knowledge<br>→ Equations and expressions<br>→ Patterns and relationships<br>Geometry and measurement<br>→ Measurement<br>→ Shape<br>→ Position and orientation<br>→ Transformation<br>Statistics<br>→ Statistical investigation<br>→ Statistical literacy<br>→ Probability |

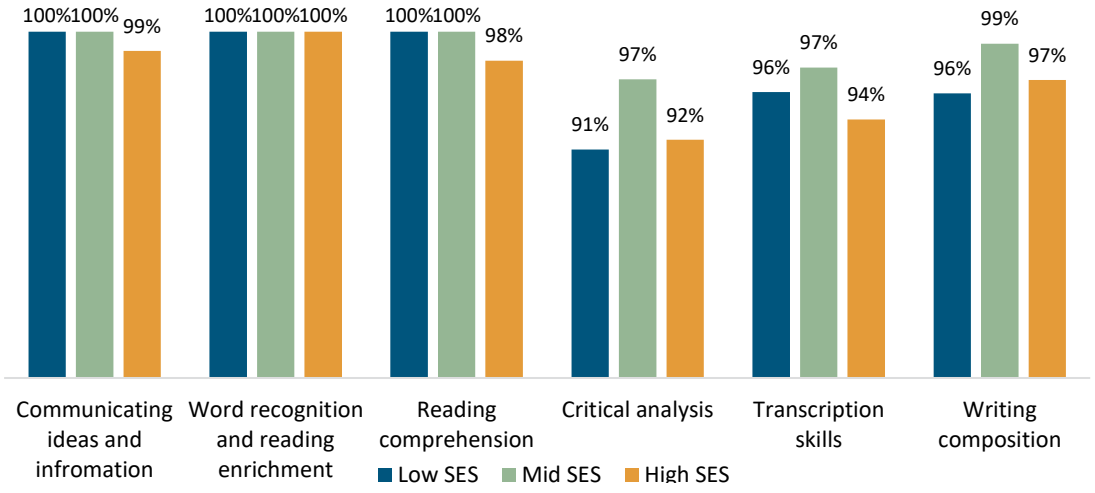
# Appendix 3: Additional figures

## What is taught?

As set out in Part 3, teachers across all school types, sizes and locations are teaching the components of the refreshed curriculum. The following graphs demonstrate the overall high rate of teachers teaching the components of the refreshed curriculum for English and maths.[af]

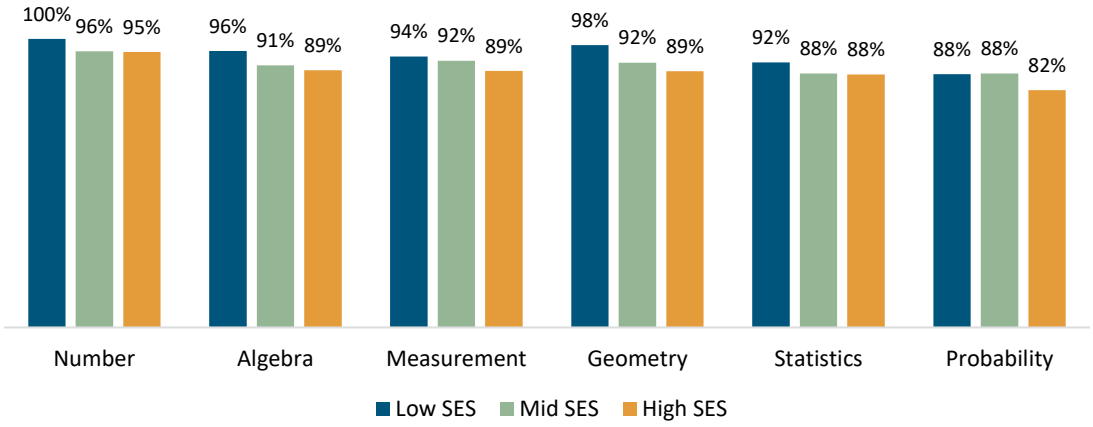
### Socio-economic community of the school

**Figure 61:** *Proportion of teachers teaching the components of English (most and least taught) by socio-economic status (SES) of the school community.*




af. These graphs show descriptive statistics only.

**Figure 62:** *Proportion of teachers teaching the components of maths (most and least taught) by socio-economic status (SES) of the school community.*



## School size

**Figure 63:** *Proportion of teachers teaching the components of English (most and least taught) by school size.*

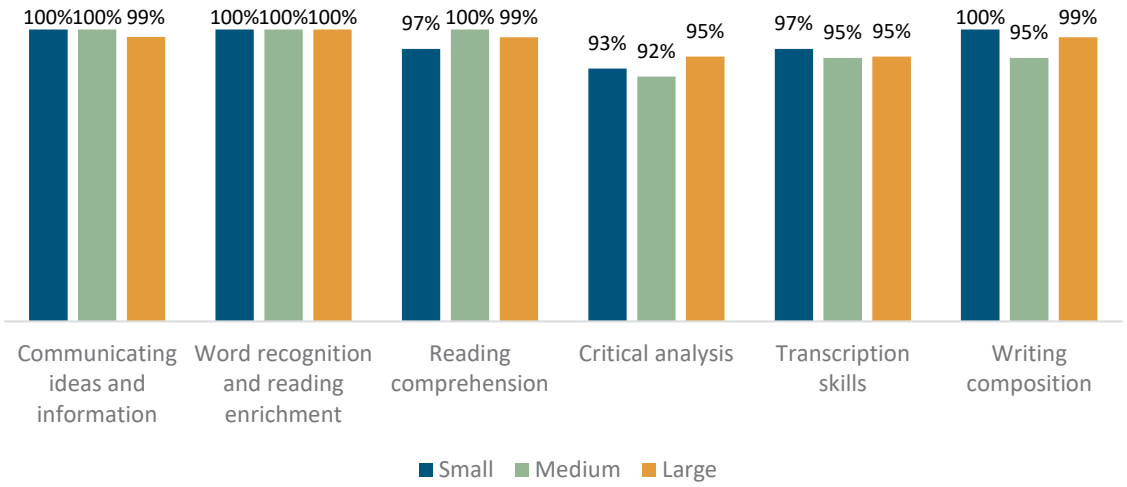
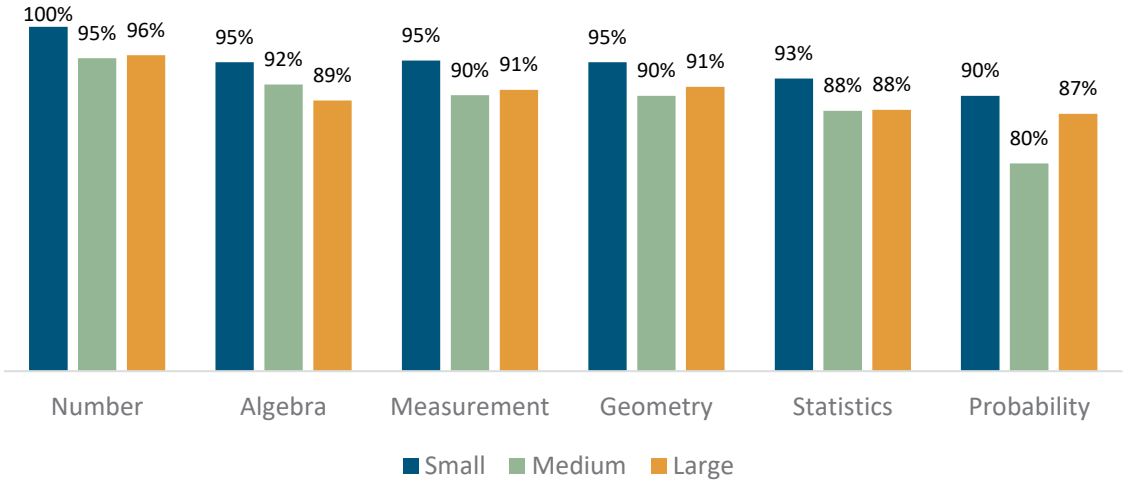



**Figure 64:** *Proportion of teachers teaching the components of maths (most and least taught) by school size.*



## School location

**Figure 65:** *Proportion of teachers teaching the components of English (most and least taught) by school location.*

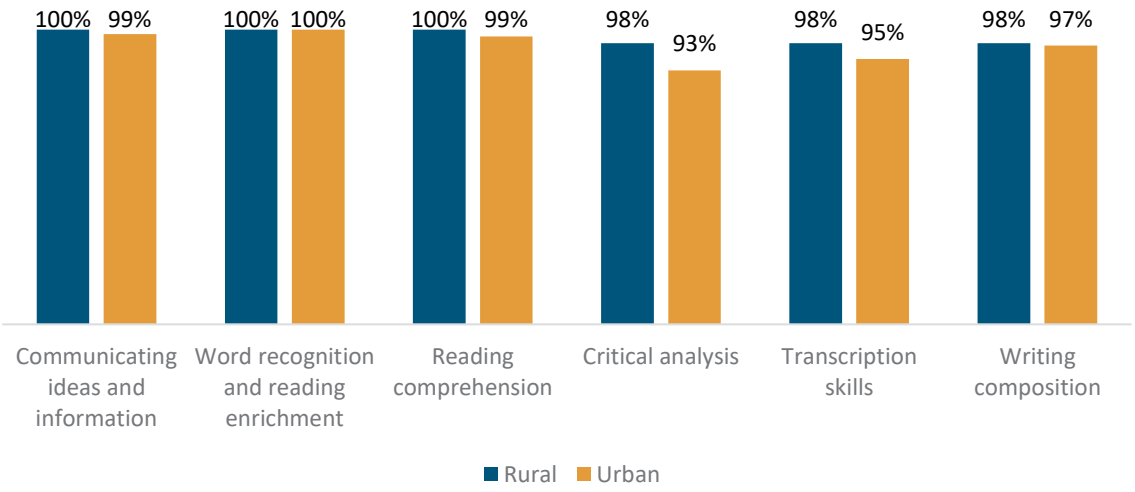
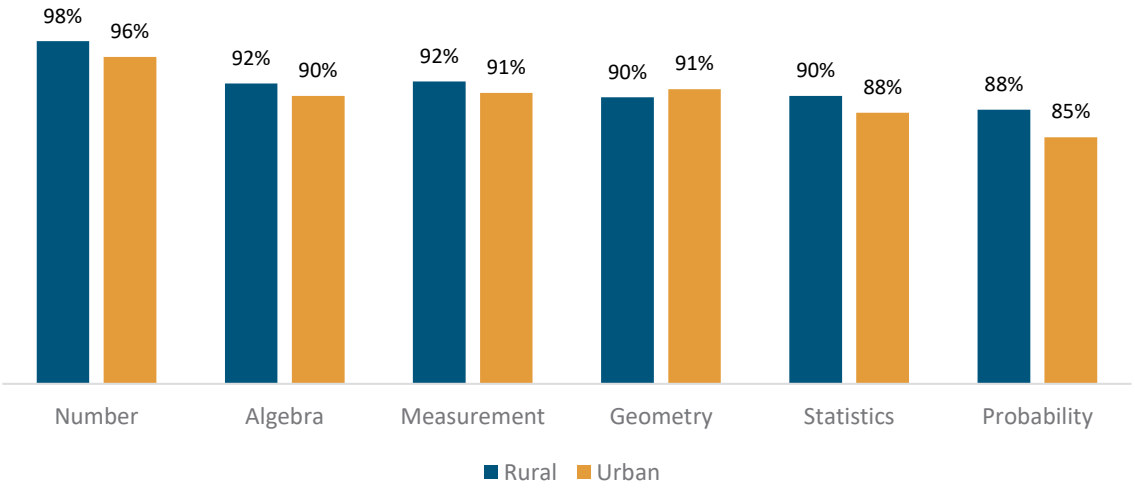



**Figure 66:** *Proportion of teachers teaching the components of maths (most and least taught) by school location.*



## How are English and maths being taught?

As set out in Part 4, teachers across all school types, sizes and locations are using the strategies of the science of learning, as they teach the refreshed curriculum. The following graphs demonstrate the overall high rate of teachers teaching the components of the refreshed curriculum for English and maths.

### Socio-economic community of the school

**Figure 67:** *Proportion of teachers using the strategies for teaching English (by socio-economic status (SES) of the school community).*

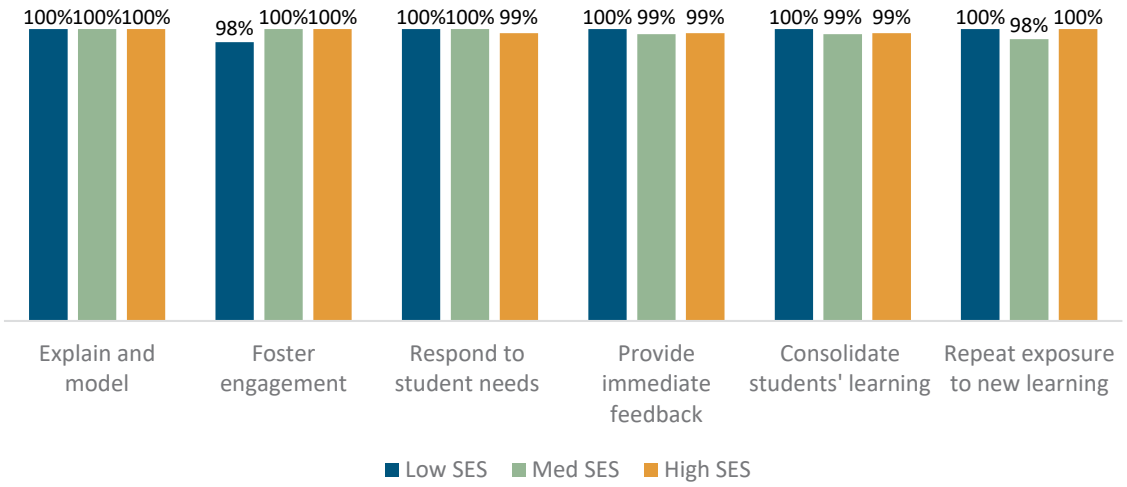
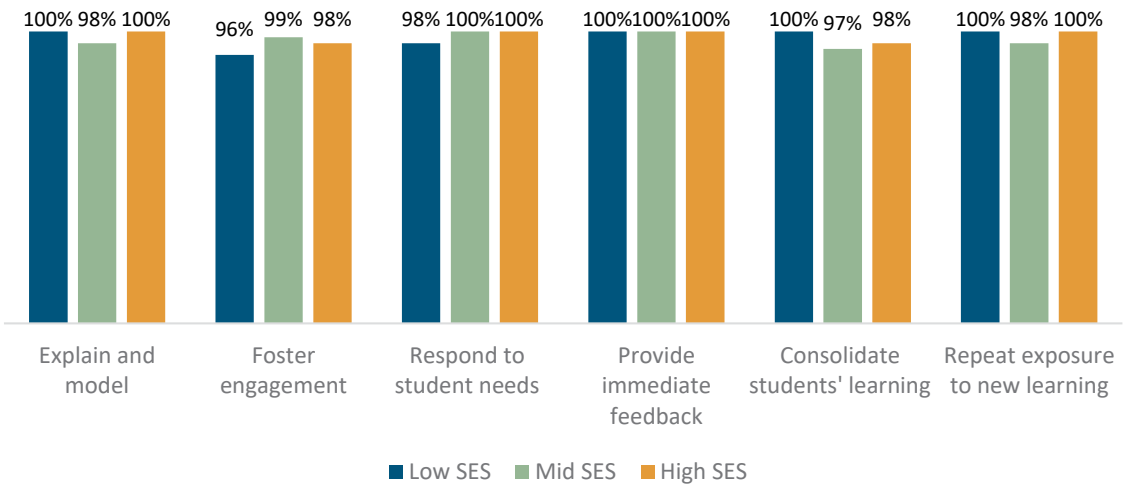



**Figure 68:** *Proportion of teachers using the strategies for teaching maths (by socio-economic status (SES) of the school community).*



## School size

**Figure 69:** *Proportion of teachers using the strategies for teaching English (by school size).*

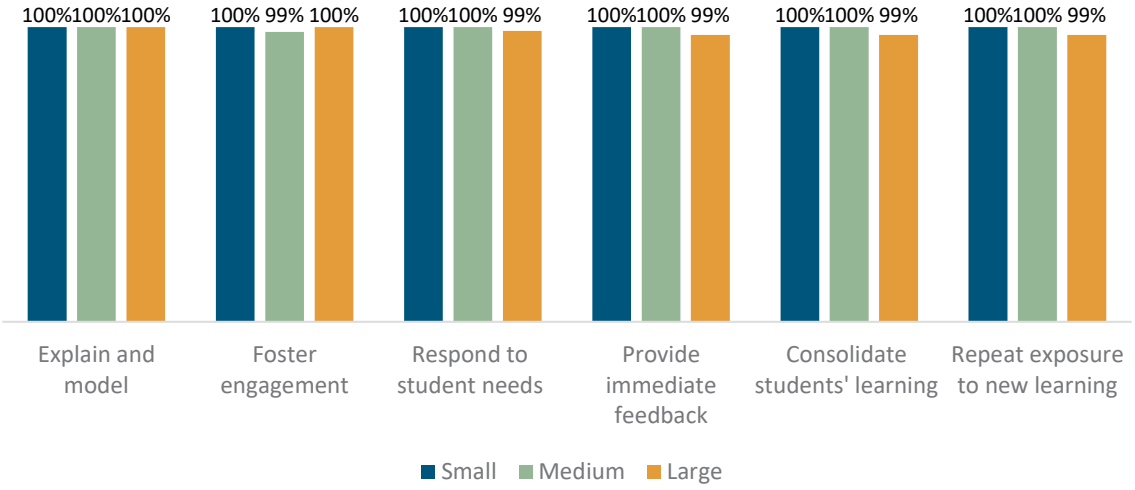
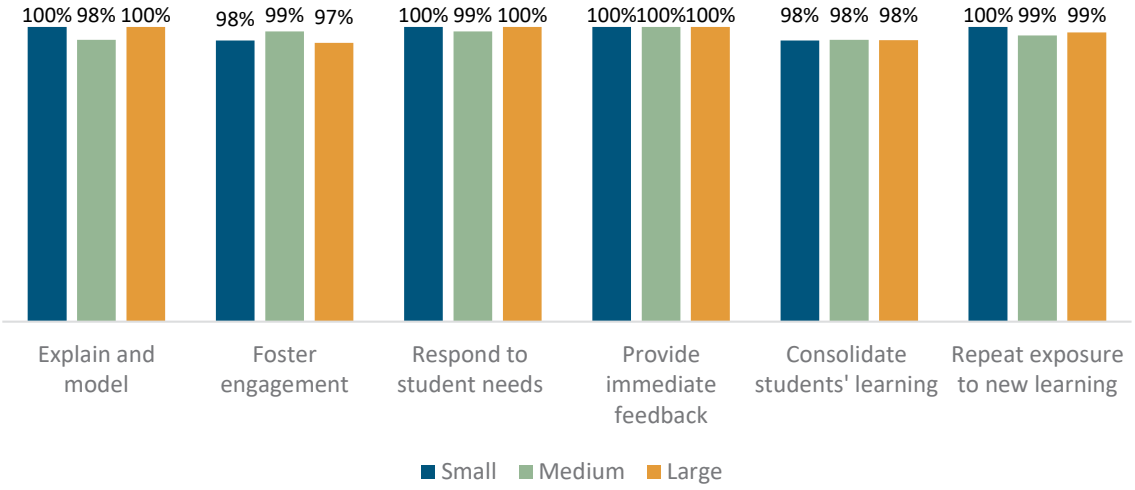



**Figure 70:** *Proportion of teachers using the strategies for teaching maths (by school size).*



## School location

**Figure 71:** *Proportion of teachers using the strategies for teaching English (by school location).*

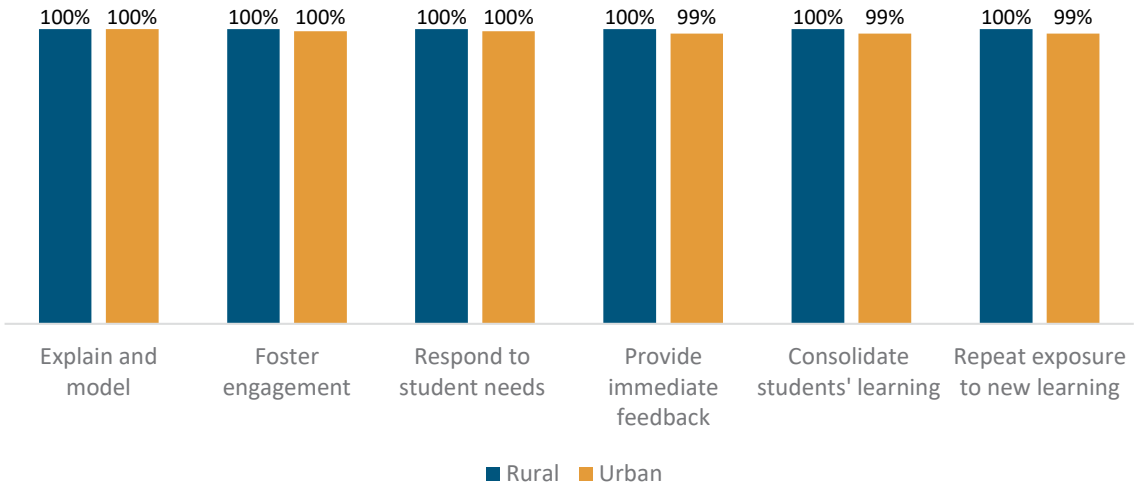
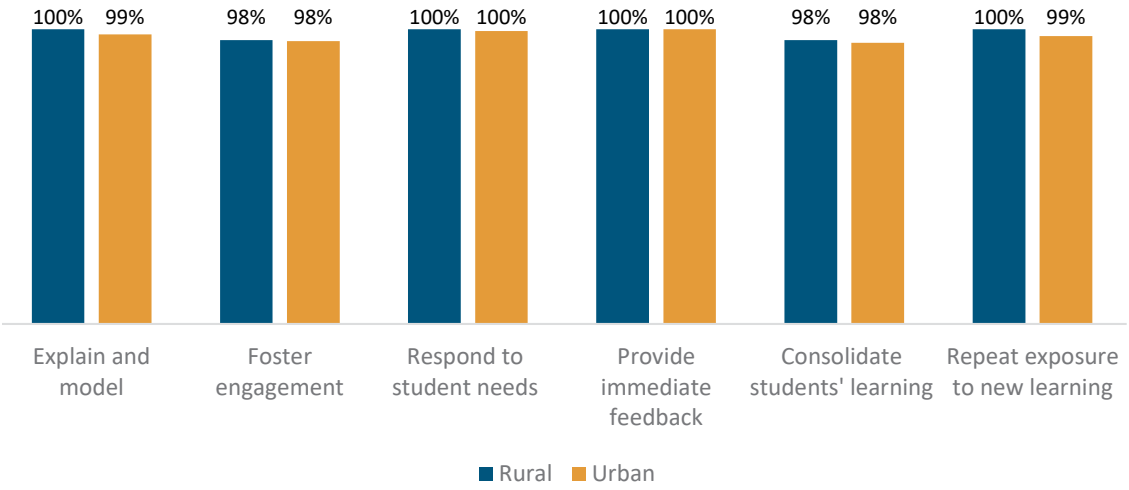



**Figure 72:** *Proportion of teachers using the strategies for teaching maths (by school location).*



# List of figures

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