



Implementing curriculum change:

Good practice for
school leaders



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE



EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

October 2025



Implementing curriculum change:

Top tips

ERO looked at practices that support effective curriculum change implementation. This framework tool sets out three practices that make a big difference.

The keys to effective curriculum change implementation are...

1 Get ready

Getting ready for implementing curriculum change means:

1. Being clear about what is happening and why

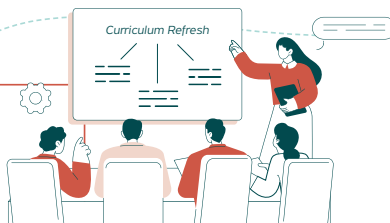
- get information from credible sources
- connect it with your school context and vision
- use professional networks for sense-checking
- be sure to communicate the purpose of the change

2. Connecting everyone involved

- ensure all members of your school community are on board, including teachers, parents and whānau, support staff, board members, and students

3. Setting expectations

- be clear about what **must** be done
- show teachers what 'good' implementation will look like and check for shared understanding



2 Get set

Getting set for implementing curriculum change means:

1. Developing a plan

- break the overall change down into a series of small, manageable steps
- consider your school's context – student needs, staff capability, access to support
- identify a clear sequence of actions and timeframes

2. Establishing a leader

- decide who will be the person responsible for overseeing the implementation eg. DP, syndicate lead, learning area expert
- support this leader to oversee communications, set clear expectations, support staff, and monitor change

3. Connecting teachers with the guidance, resources, and PLD to know what to do

- find out what supports are available, e.g. PLD, online resources, models of good practice and expert teachers



3 Go

Actually implementing curriculum change means:

1. Supporting teachers to make changes

- actively support teachers by building in practices such as regular observations and feedback, mentoring, and regular collaboration time

2. Monitoring how things are going

- ensure change is taking place through: Walk arounds, lesson observations, monitoring student achievement data, gathering student voice, and regular practice sharing

3. Adapting as needed

- be prepared to revisit and review plans when things aren't working
- understand barriers before finding solutions

More info:

Want more detail, including evidence-based strategies and stories? Check out our full good practice guide here at evidence.ero.govt.nz



Content

Introduction to this good practice guide	2
Summary of key practices	4
1: Get ready	5
2: Get set	11
3: Go	18
Conclusion	22
Useful resources	23



Introduction to this good practice guide

This guide sets out the key practices for leaders to support effective curriculum implementation. It shares the early insights of what works well when implementing curriculum change – gathered from ERO’s review of implementation of the refreshed English and maths learning areas throughout New Zealand. It also draws on established evidence around effective change implementation, providing practical actions leaders can take.

What does this guide cover?

Implementation is critical for turning engagement with research into tangible changes in school practices and pupil outcomes.

Education Endowment Foundation, from the report: *A school’s guide to implementation* (2024)

Strong targeted leadership in schools is key to supporting effective curriculum change. Schools make change best when supported by a leader who is responsible for driving the curriculum change and putting in place the implementation practice that works. This guide draws on the top tips we gathered from leaders who are successfully implementing the refreshed English and maths learning areas here in New Zealand. It provides best practice advice and practical strategies to support leaders to make effective implementation decisions in schools.

The Government has introduced changes to both of New Zealand’s national curriculums – the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. To support the implementation of these changes, ERO is undertaking a multi-year programme of review. In 2025, we looked at the changes to the English and maths learning areas, to find out about how it’s going and where improvements could be made for future implementation of change. We looked at what works best to get the most out of the curriculum improvement process.

This guide draws from the established evidence base around effective implementation, alongside what we learnt from schools implementing the refreshed English and maths learning areas this year. These insights have shaped this guide, which focuses on what works, and provides practical examples from real schools to support change implementation.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is designed to support **school leaders** as they implement curriculum changes. It helps leaders focus on what matters most, and provides practical strategies to support effective implementation and change management across their school.

This guide identifies the key messages and takeaways around driving change to provide a useful reference for school leaders. It aligns with guidance and resources from the Ministry of Education (the Ministry), and remains relevant across diverse school settings and for different learning areas.

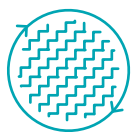
How to use this guide

This guide provides three practice areas which outline what has proven successful for implementing curriculum changes in New Zealand schools:

- 1) Get ready – understanding the change
- 2) Get set – preparing for implementation
- 3) Go – getting started

Each of the practices are supported by real-life examples and reflective questions to support implementation.

This good practice guide is supported by findings from ERO's national review report *A new chapter: How well are the changes to English and maths going?* and acts as a companion resource. You can find the review report here: www.evidence.ero.govt.nz.



Summary of key practices

GET READY

We can support the school community to understand upcoming changes by:

- 1) Being clear about what's happening and why
- 2) Connecting everyone involved
- 3) Setting expectations

GET SET

We can prepare for implementation by:

- 1) Developing a plan
- 2) Establishing a leader
- 3) Connecting teachers with the guidance, resources, and PLD to know what to do

GO

We can support our school to take a structured approach to implementation by:

- 1) Supporting teachers to make changes in their classrooms
- 2) Monitoring how things are going
- 3) Adapting as needed

1 *Get ready*

Effective curriculum change starts with clarity about what's happening and why, and a shared sense of purpose. When leaders take time to communicate well and build a shared understanding, they set their school up for success.

Why does this matter?

Curriculum change works best when leaders build clarity and a shared understanding across their school. When everyone understands what's changing, why it's changing, and what the expectations are, it creates a sense of purpose and direction. This helps teachers, students, and parents and whānau feel more confident and engaged in the change process.

How can you support your school to 'get ready'?

To be in the best position to implement curriculum change, school leaders should aim to:

- 1) be clear about what's happening and why
- 2) connect everyone involved
- 3) set expectations.

1) Be clear about what's happening and why

Clear communication is key. Teachers and the school community are more likely to engage with and support new learning when they understand its purpose, see its relevance, and feel supported to succeed.

Leaders told us that clear messaging helps them get greater buy-in from their staff. Before talking to teachers, leaders may need to take time to get clear in their own mind what the key messages are that they need to deliver. Leaders across the schools we visited told us that teachers respond well when given a clear sense of purpose, alongside a mix of clear, actionable steps they need to take in classrooms now.

DID YOU KNOW?

Teachers in New Zealand are over five times more likely to report an improvement in their practice when they are motivated to use what they have learnt.

“We have made it clear [to parents and whānau] that things are changing and we’re getting our heads around them as well... You might see some changes there.”

LEADER

What if leaders aren’t clear either?

Sometimes leaders themselves are unsure about what exactly is required. This can be due to conflicting messages from different sources, a lack of time to process information, the pace of changes, or competing priorities. When leaders aren’t clear, it’s hard for them to guide their teams.

To get clarity about changes and expectations, Ministry communications (like the School Leaders’ Bulletin and Curriculum Newsletter email, and the Tāhūrangi website) are the first port of call. Leaders can also reach out to their regional Ministry office.

To further unpack expectations, we heard that peer networks, leadership groups, and leaders’ associations and unions are helpful. These professional networks can offer valuable support with sense-checking understandings and unpacking official guidance.

Information overload – what not to do

As information comes in, it can be tempting to pass it all on. However, we heard from leaders and teachers that the volume of information around curriculum change can be overwhelming, and make them *less* clear.

We heard that practices to *avoid* are:

- **Failing to filter or prioritise information** – treating all messages as equally important can mean the most important messages or actions get missed.
- **Forwarding irrelevant emails** – check to make sure they are relevant to the audience.
- **Unclear subject lines or vague messages** – recipients may miss details or overlook information if the urgency or relevance of the message isn’t clearly signposted.
- **Working in silos** – we heard it’s better to communicate closely across teams and other leaders to make sure that teachers and parents and whānau are receiving consistent messages from the school.
- **Assuming everyone has the same context** – forwarding information without key background information can leave recipients confused.
- **Not following up about what national messages mean for this school** – leaving teachers to interpret for themselves can lead to misunderstandings.

2) Connect everyone involved

Curriculum change is more successful when everyone is on the same page about it. Dedicated time to discuss changes (like staff meetings), supported by targeted resources, can help leaders keep everyone focused on key messages. This ensures that all teachers are aligned on what needs to shift in the classroom.

Connecting people goes beyond the school gates – leaders need to make sure the *whole* school community is coming along on the journey. When leaders communicate clearly and consistently across staff, students, and parents and whānau, it helps build trust, shared purpose, and momentum.

This collective approach makes the process of implementing change smoother and more effective for the English and maths learning areas. Parents and whānau told us that they appreciate being well-informed about what is changing and why, and to have opportunities to address concerns and benefits. School leaders said they would benefit from more targeted resources to support these conversations.

“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

DID YOU KNOW?

Parents and whānau told us that they are most interested in knowing what curriculum change meant for *what* and *how* their child was being taught.

Ideas for sharing and connecting

Leaders told us that clear, consistent communication helps build trust and shared purpose across the school community. Helpful practices include:

- **Having multiple ways to share information and updates** – different forms of communication can be more effective for different audiences, or for different types of information. Strategies can include face-to-face or online meetings, emails, and newsletters for sharing information with parents and whānau. Social media posts are a good way of sharing updates and showcasing progress for the whole community. Online assessment portals provide an effective way of sharing student progress and achievement with parents and whānau. Standing school board agenda items and dedicated staff meetings (including with teacher aides) ensures that momentum is maintained. Schools should also be aware of their parents and whānau who do not speak English as a first language. It may be necessary to explore options for translating communications.

- **Keeping messages simple and focused** – making sure key messages and action points are easy for people to digest. This means they can focus on what's most important. Some useful tips to consider are:
 - stick to one key idea per message
 - regularly revisit key messages
 - use plain language
 - be clear about what's changing and why
 - include actions or next steps.
- **Creating space for feedback** – staff and parents and whānau appreciate chances to ask questions, share concerns, and clarify their understandings.
- **Celebrating progress** – sharing stories of what's working builds support and momentum.
- **Updating even when there isn't much to report** – this can help staff and parents and whānau trust that they are being kept in the loop – not forgotten about.

3) Set expectations

Establishing clear expectations for what *must* be in place provides certainty for staff in a changing landscape. This certainty gives a clear direction for them to follow, with clear outcomes to achieve, and a good understanding of the what, how, and why of the change. 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 refreshed learning areas. This can include putting significant effort into making the changes as easy to engage with as possible for their teachers, maintaining the expectation that the refreshed learning areas will be used.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly all school leaders have set expectations for teachers to use the refreshed English and maths learning areas.

Nine out of ten leaders (89 percent) know what they need to do to implement the new learning area for English, and nearly all (95 percent) know what they need to do for maths.

What's optional and what's not

Curriculum implementation is more successful when leaders set clear expectations, including about what's optional and what's not. Teachers need to know what they can influence or adapt, and where their effort wouldn't be well-placed.

Helpful practices include:

- **Being up front about what's non-negotiable** – clearly communicate from the beginning what is required by legislation (e.g., implement refreshed learning areas) and what the school must do to meet the requirements.

- **Explaining the 'why' behind what's non-negotiable** – for example, to meet legal requirements, ensure consistent practice across schools, and urgently improve student achievement.
- **Clarifying where there is flexibility** – this helps teachers to channel their effort into areas where tailoring makes the biggest difference.
- **Showing what good looks like** – it can be easier for teachers to know what they should be doing when there are readily available resources, examples of good practice, and opportunities for them to observe leaders or expert colleagues. This makes it easier for them to picture what to aim for in their own classrooms.
- **Checking for shared understanding** – regular discussions and meetings to reinforce key messages helps ensure staff are aligned.

Real-life example: Be clear about what's happening and why

One principal we spoke to emphasised the importance of first getting clear in their own mind 'the why' behind curriculum change before communicating it to their staff.

By sorting through the information coming from the Ministry, identifying the most immediate priorities, and pacing the work carefully, they can present a clear and consistent message to staff. This clarity helps teachers understand not just what is changing, but why it matters.

This principal signposts changes and expectations into manageable chunks to keep everyone focused on what is most important. This approach is having a positive impact, with the school experiencing a smooth transition to the refreshed learning areas.

Real-life example: Connect everyone involved

Several leaders across the schools we visited told us that celebrating progress was an important way of keeping everyone connected through implementing learning area changes. Teachers value chances to share what went well, unpack results, and see evidence of improvement.

One leader told us that it was especially motivating and exciting for teachers when they could point to positive outcomes in the data. Leaders also created space for teachers to acknowledge when they need additional support. Leaders said that being open about challenges reinforces a sense of being 'in this together,' which helps staff feel supported through the experience of change.

Real-life example: Set expectations

In many of the schools we visited, we noticed a pattern of leaders clarifying that implementing the refreshed English and maths learning areas is a top priority. They set strong expectations that all teachers would be engaging with the refreshed content, and made sure staff would be supported through the change. In smaller schools, this leadership often came from a learning area expert or a key leader who was trusted to drive the work forward.

Leaders made their expectations visible by creating opportunities for teachers to see what good implementation looked like. In several schools, subject leads opened their classrooms so colleagues could observe the new practices in action. These observations were followed by structured discussions, where teachers could ask questions and reflect on what they had seen. This approach helped to clarify what was expected in practice and gave teachers a clear direction to follow.

“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

Teachers told us they felt more confident when they could see the learning areas being taught well and had time to unpack it with someone who had strong pedagogical and content knowledge. Leaders balanced their high expectations with practical support, making it easier for teachers to engage with the changes while maintaining a clear focus on what needed to be achieved.

Reflective questions:

- How clearly have we communicated the purpose of changes to our staff, students, and parents and whānau?
- How can we support our teachers to understand what is changing, why it matters, and how it will impact their classroom practice?
- What opportunities do we have to bring our staff together to build a shared understanding of the learning area changes?
- How can we most effectively dedicate time to support collective planning and alignment?
- What resources or support do we need to help our school community engage with the learning area changes?
- How can we make sure our messaging is consistent across all levels of the school – from leadership to classroom to community?
- How clearly have we communicated to staff our expectations of what *must* happen? How are we ensuring these expectations remain realistic and achievable?

2 Get set

Change works best when it is supported by a well-planned sequence of actions, has clear leadership and is underpinned with good understanding of the change needed.

Why does this matter?

Once teachers and the school community understand what changes are expected, leaders need to develop a plan that is practical and achievable. 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.

How can you support your school to ‘get set’?

To be in the best position for implementing curriculum change, school leaders should aim to:

- 1) develop a plan
- 2) establish a leader
- 3) connect teachers with the guidance, resources, and PLD to know what to do.

1) Develop a plan

Effective plans break bigger changes into smaller manageable steps, and sequence the order of actions needed to implement the overall change.

School leaders need to consider many factors which will differ across schools. Leaders consider what point they are starting from, what changes will be simpler for them to implement, and what changes will present more of a challenge. They also need to consider the capacity of their teachers to tackle what is needed of them.

By carefully sequencing the changes, leaders make sure teachers aren't overwhelmed by trying to implement everything at once. Leaders told us effective and sustainable changes require prioritising key aspects and pacing the work so that each step is clear, actionable, and achievable.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

“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.”

LEADER

Useful things to consider when planning

Effective plans break big changes into smaller, more manageable steps.

- **School context** – Consider the strengths, experiences, challenges, strategic goals, and needs of both staff and students when shaping your plan.
- **Opportunities to collaborate** – Involve staff in developing and discussing plans. This helps build buy-in and fosters a sense of ownership through shared professional insights.
- **Predicting challenges** – Identify areas that may require additional time, support, or effort so you can plan accordingly.
- **Teacher capacity** – Take into account teachers’ experience, capability, team culture, and attitudes to change when allocating roles and responsibilities.
- **Ways to leverage existing processes** – Use what’s already working, such as staff meetings, leadership walk-throughs, observations, practice analysis conversations, and distributed tasks and responsibilities.
- **Contingency planning** – while an overall leader helps maintain direction and momentum, distributing roles across the team builds collective ownership and helps the plan stay on track when key people are away.

2) Establish a leader

Schools are more likely to make and sustain curriculum changes when a dedicated leader is responsible for driving the work and ensuring expectations are clearly set and consistently followed through. Leaders set a plan for implementing the change and manage the pace of change for their staff. They also keep track of messages and guidance coming from the Ministry and make sure that these reach teachers. It’s important that school leaders clearly establish the mandate of this curriculum leader to staff, so they can be effective in their role.

We found that English and maths learning area changes were implemented most effectively when a dedicated leader, often supported by a wider leadership team, was designated to oversee the work. These leaders took responsibility for understanding what needed to happen, when, and how to access the right resources and supports. By actively managing the flow of information and setting clear expectations, they helped teachers stay focused and confident. In Māori-medium schools, teachers told us that strong and experienced leadership made a real difference as leaders filtered and prioritised information so that teachers received what was most relevant and timely.

We heard that teachers appreciate having a curriculum leader or subject specialist in their school to lead the implementation, who they can go to with questions. They shared examples of leaders modelling practices and strategies, conducting observations of practice, and giving targeted feedback. These actions make the change more manageable and meaningful for teachers.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) leaders have someone responsible for leading the implementation of changes to the English learning area, and a similar number (91 percent) for maths. Teachers told us they value having a curriculum leader or subject specialist they can go to with questions.

“We are lucky to have a maths specialist leading our maths implementation – adaptability and co-teaching is promoted as teachers upskill.”

TEACHER

Implementation leadership in small schools

Small schools don't have the large teams and range of specialist staff that larger schools have. We heard that in these settings, collegial networks play an important role. Leaders can seek valuable support from networks like the Rural Primary and Area School Leadership Association (RASLA) and the New Zealand Area Schools Association (NZASA), as well as regional clusters and large-scale unions and peak bodies, which offer valued support. From 2026, the Ministry's Leadership Advisory service is doubling in size, and will include a North and South Island based rural and small school advisor, and a North and South Island based area and composite school advisor.

3) Connecting teachers with the guidance, resources, and PLD to know what to do

Where teachers lack confidence, knowledge, or capability, it is harder to change practice. Accessing centralised professional learning and development (PLD) and teaching resources is a key way to support teachers to implement curriculum change. PLD explains to teachers both what should be taught, and how to teach it.

Teachers shared that they appreciate the clearly sequenced and structured refreshed English and maths resources. 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, enables teachers to get started on delivering the refreshed learning areas, and brings consistency across classrooms. We also heard that teachers are often less confident in teaching maths and appreciate added clarity – especially for more complex aspects of maths as students get older.

Leaders told us they are taking deliberate steps to maximise their investment in teacher PLD. They acknowledged their teachers need time to complete PLD and be supported to embed new practices, to enhance their teaching of the refreshed learning areas. Providing PLD has been an important factor in how leaders have decided to implement the changes.

For practical guidance on getting the most out of PLD for teachers, see ERO's short guide *School leaders' good practice: Professional learning and development*. www.evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/school-leaders-good-practice-professional-learning-and-development

“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 them better.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“The 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.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL BEGINNER TEACHER

DID YOU KNOW?

Guidance and resources for the English and maths learning areas are making a big impact for teachers who have accessed them.

ERO found that teachers are four times more likely to report an improvement in their practice when external PLD (like that for English and maths) provides stepped-out teaching techniques and tools.

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 are nearly four times more likely to have changed their teaching practice.

“You’ve got this massive landscape – and it’s about knowing what’s important, and when, and who.”

PRINCIPAL



DID YOU KNOW?

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. Nearly three-quarters of teachers (71 percent) use it every day.

Tailor support

Teachers are diverse, and the support that works for one teacher won’t always work for another. Curriculum implementation is more effective when leaders tailor their support.

This starts with leaders reflecting on how to match PLD, guidance, and resources to different staff needs. Since expertise, confidence, and readiness vary, support should be flexible and responsive. For example:

- an experienced teacher with expertise in maths is going to need a different approach to a teacher who feels much less confident in maths
- a Provisionally Certified Teacher may need a more structured approach to support than other teachers
- teachers who are resistant to change may need more guided support and opportunities to collaborate, to help socialise them into using new ways of working
- teacher aides need to be familiar with the refreshed learning areas they are supporting teachers to implement in the classroom – and to be clear on their role in those lessons.

Real-life example: Develop a plan

We visited one school that took a systematic approach to planning and implementing learning area changes in English and maths. The senior leadership team started with an in-depth review alongside teachers, reflecting on where student outcomes could be improved. Engaging teachers to share their own insights helped build a sense of ownership and understanding of what would be needed.

The team synthesised this feedback to identify the school's strengths and needs before developing a term-by-term implementation plan. They clearly outlined targets for each stage of implementation, which ensured that teachers knew exactly what the minimum outcome was for each term. This also ensured teachers were using best practice and implementing the learning areas as they were designed. In Term 1, they focused on building familiarity with the refreshed learning areas and understanding the intended outcomes for students. For example, teachers would be expected to be using new teaching resources for maths.

Built into the plan at the end of each term was a 'check-in' with teachers about what they had done, what worked well or not, and whether they were ready for the next step.

Real-life example: Establish a leader

At one school, the lead maths teacher had previously led a local community of practice related to maths teaching. This expert teacher has deep subject knowledge and experience in supporting other teachers to improve their practice. This makes them well-placed to lead the implementation of the refreshed maths learning area.

Leaders at this school recognise that effective curriculum leadership involves two key components. The first is programme management – understanding what needs to happen and ensuring it gets done. The second is learning area and pedagogical leadership – being the expert that others turn to for guidance and support. Both aspects are essential for driving meaningful and sustained learning area change.

To enable this, leaders make sure the maths lead has the space to lead both strategically and pedagogically. They structure the timetable to allow release time for the maths lead to stay across communications and guidance, connect with other leaders, and plan how to support teachers in their school.

This approach reflects what we heard in many schools – that successful implementation is often driven by a designated leader who is trusted and supported to lead well. School leaders play a critical role in identifying the right person for the role and setting them up for success.

Real-life example: Connect teachers with the guidance, resources, and PLD to know what to do

One school found that the detailed maths resources provided by the Ministry were essential for helping their Year 7 and 8 teachers understand how to deliver the refreshed learning area. Leaders prioritised supporting teachers with clear, practical guidance on how to use the resources, including by highlighting key sections and modelling how the approaches could look in practice. Teachers found that this support helped them move beyond knowing *what* to teach to feeling confident about *how* to teach it well.

Reflective questions:

- Who is leading the curriculum change in our school? Are they the right person, and are they well supported?
- Based on our current data and evidence, what area of change needs to be our first priority to ensure better outcomes for our students? What sequence of actions needs to be implemented to deliver this change?
- What resources do we have access to that will support us to make meaningful change in this area? What expertise do we have on staff already? What support can we access from external groups?
- What deliberate steps are we taking to make sure teachers feel supported, confident, and capable in implementing curriculum changes – especially in areas where capability may be lower?

3 Go

Taking a structured but flexible approach is most effective for implementing and sustaining change. Having a good plan matters, but it's also important to stay on top of whether that plan is working.

Why does this matter?

Embedding refreshed learning area content means long-term sustainable change. This requires providing the necessary supports for teachers to continue to deliver these changes. Professional learning, teaching and learning resources, models of good practice, and dedicated meeting time support teachers to meet change expectations.

We looked at the need to have a clear plan and sequence of actions earlier in this guide. It is important that leaders can monitor the success of their plans, and pivot and adapt when they need to. This approach maintains forward momentum.

How can you support your school to take a structured but flexible approach to implementation?

To maintain forward momentum and sustain change, school leaders should:

- support teachers to make the changes
- monitor how things are going
- adapt as needed.

1) Support teachers to make changes in their classroom

Embedding change is necessary to ensure what is learned sticks. As well as providing training and resources to shift teacher practice, we found it was valuable to support teachers to embed learning in their classroom.

Teachers need active support to successfully implement these changes. It can be useful to work alongside them to observe their practice and offer feedback which empowers them to make change.

DID YOU KNOW?

ERO's 2025 review of PLD found that it is crucial to have a clear plan to track progress, monitor shifts in teacher practice, and support teachers to apply what they have learned.

DID YOU KNOW?

Across all PLD, half of teachers are not completely clear about how to use what they learn from PLD in their classroom.

Monitor how things are going

We can only be sure that change implementation is effective when outcomes are closely monitored. It is important not to assume that just because an action has been taken, a positive shift has automatically occurred.

Using evidence and data to make sure that actions are leading to changes in teachers' practice, and in student outcomes, is a necessary step in implementing wide-scale change. Students' achievement data, unit-planning documentation, lesson observations, and senior leadership walk-arounds are all ways of gathering a sense of how well-embedded and effective changes are, and how effective they are. Data-gathering may also include reports from the Ministry or ERO.

It is important to make sure teachers have the confidence, knowledge, and capability to change practice. Through monitoring how things are going, you can provide targeted support to teachers where it is most needed.

DID YOU KNOW?

Encouragingly, half of teachers, across year levels, report improved achievement in English (54 percent) and in maths (51 percent) compared to last year.

Phonics checks show a significant improvement in student achievement. The biggest increase was in the number of students exceeding curriculum expectations, which more than doubled from Term 1 to Term 3 (from 20 percent to 43 percent).^a

Effective strategies for monitoring progress

- **'Learning walks' by leaders** – these focused visits to classrooms allow leaders to gain a sense of how the learning areas are being delivered.
- **Peer observations** – a culture of informal observation and feedback empowers teachers to take risks. This helps them to try out the content and strategies in the refreshed learning areas. Having trusted colleagues creates a sense of safety when working through change.
- **Sharing examples of effective practices at staff meetings** – for example, teachers or teaching teams sharing examples of success at staff meetings. A specific learning activity, a unit plan outline, or resource can provide a real-world illustration of how these refreshed learning areas can be applied in the classroom.
- **Gathering student voice** – for example, a short online survey with targeted questions about how they are responding to specific teaching methods, or asking students about their perception of their capability over time. Parent and whānau voice can be useful for this purpose too.
- **Looking at student data** – tracking student achievement to identify if there have been positive shifts.

^a Students in term 1, 2 and 3 are different groups of students, who have all received 20 weeks of instruction at school.

2) Adapt as needed

While implementing changes, it is key to adapt where things aren't working for your school. If you aren't seeing the shift that you would hope to, it is important to consider what the barriers are. Consider whether staff need support to make this change. This may include sequencing changes to make sure staff are able to implement changes at a manageable pace. Being able to adapt an action plan to overcome these barriers is essential for sustainable change.

DID YOU KNOW?

Encouragingly, 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.

What is happening, when it's not working?

It is inevitable that barriers will arise, and things will not go exactly according to plan. At these moments it is important to pause and take stock before jumping to solutions. Leaders might ask themselves:

- Are the expectations understood? Are we sure?
- Has adequate training and support been provided?
- What options are available to overcome this barrier?

Real-life example: Support teachers to make changes in their classroom

One implementation leader supports teachers by providing a safe environment for them to try out parts of the refreshed learning areas and engage in active reflection. This leader observes teachers trying out new content and strategies and empowers them to reflect on their own capability. They support teachers to identify where things are working well and where things need refining.

This helps bridge the gap between theory and practice and supports a cycle of learning: 'implement – reflect on feedback – refine – implement again'.

“We employed [an expert] to work alongside in the classroom with students and teachers. 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



Real-life example: Monitoring and adapting

In one school we visited, curriculum leaders consistently follow up with teachers about the way implementation is tracking. They check in with staff early to identify what is working and where changes are needed. This allows them to adjust the level of support.

Following external PLD, they find a way to provide internal follow-up sessions and offer space for teachers to reflect and contextualise what they have learnt as a group. For example, checking that their teachers feel confident to move forward, and if they are still unsure, they give them extra guidance.

Reflective questions:

- What specific supports – such as training, resources, and time – can we provide to help teachers confidently and effectively implement the refreshed learning areas in their classrooms?
- How are we monitoring the impact of these changes on teaching practice and student outcomes, and what evidence are we using to inform our next steps?
- How responsive is our implementation plan to emerging challenges or barriers, and what processes do we have in place to adapt our approach when needed?
- Are we pacing the implementation in a way that allows previous actions to take root before introducing new ones, and how are we checking for signs of staff overwhelm or fatigue?
- How are we monitoring and adjusting our implementation plan to make sure changes are being embedded effectively over time?



Conclusion

Implementation of curriculum change is essential to make sure that it is effective. Strong leadership plays a key part in implementing change well in schools.

Good leadership is key for managing changes to the curriculum within schools. Leaders can do this effectively by supporting the school community to understand upcoming changes (getting ready), preparing and planning for implementation (getting set), and supporting their school through the implementation process (and going). This guide provides best practice advice and practical strategies to support leaders to make effective implementation decisions in schools, and to implement curriculum change effectively.



Useful resources

What is it?	Link
Report: A new chapter: How well are the changes to English and maths going? 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.	A new chapter: How well are the changes to English and maths going? Please refer to the full report on our website: www.evidence.ero.govt.nz
Tāhūrangi Implementation Supports is a central hub with up-to-date resources, guidance, and professional learning to support curriculum change. It includes tailored supports for the English and maths learning areas.	Tāhūrangi Implementation Supports (tahurangi.education.govt.nz)
The Education Endowment Foundation's 2024 guide to effectively implementation for schools.	A School's Guide to Implementation guidance report (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
This resource outlines extension opportunities using Ministry-funded maths resources from Maths – No Problem! It is designed to support teachers to deepen the maths knowledge and confidence of students.	Extension Opportunities: Maths – No Problem!
This resource outlines extension opportunities for teachers using Ministry-funded maths resources from Numicon. It is designed to support teachers to deepen the maths knowledge and confidence of students.	Extension Opportunities: Numicon

What is it?	Link
This resource outlines extension opportunities for teachers using Ministry-funded maths resources from Oxford University press . It is designed to support teachers to deepen the maths knowledge and confidence of students.	Extension Opportunities: Oxford University Press
This resource outlines extension opportunities for teachers using Ministry-funded maths resources from PR1ME Scholastic . It is designed to support teachers to deepen the maths knowledge and confidence of students.	Extension Opportunities: PR1ME Scholastic
Leading sustainable change. This guide brings together insights from leaders' research to support effective, long-term change management in schools. The resource is especially useful for leaders navigating complex or large-scale change.	Leading sustainable change: Wisdom from textbooks and trenches in post-quake Canterbury (www.growwaitaha.co.nz)
School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why. This collection of case studies highlights real-life examples of leadership in action, including how leaders build trust, develop shared vision, and support staff through change.	School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why (www.educationcounts.govt.nz)

For references, please refer to the full report on our website:
www.evidence.ero.govt.nz



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**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Implementing curriculum change: Good practice for school leaders

Published 2025

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Digital: 978-1-991421-13-5

Print: 978-1-991421-12-8



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