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S Summary

New Zealand's National Education Monitoring Project commenced in 1993, with the task of assessing and reporting on the achievement of New Zealand primary school children in all areas of the school curriculum. Children are assessed at two class levels: year 4 (halfway through primary education) and year 8 (at the end of primary education). Different curriculum areas and skills are assessed each year, over a four-year cycle. The main goal of national monitoring is to provide detailed information about what children can do so that patterns of performance can be recognised, successes celebrated, and desirable changes to educational practices and resources identified and implemented.

Each year, small random samples of children are selected nationally, then assessed in their own schools by teachers specially seconded and trained for this work. Task instructions are given orally by teachers, through video presentations, on laptop computers, or in writing. Many of the assessment tasks involve the children in the use of equipment and supplies. Their responses are presented orally, by demonstration, in writing, in computer files, or through submission of other physical products. Many of the responses are recorded on videotape for subsequent analysis.

The use of many tasks with both year 4 and year 8 students allows comparisons of the performance of year 4 and 8 students in 2004. Because some tasks have been used twice, in 2000 and again in 2004, trends in performance across the four-year period can also be analysed.

ASSESSING READING AND SPEAKING

In 2004, the second year of the third cycle of national monitoring, three areas were assessed: music, aspects of technology, and reading and speaking. This report presents details and results of the assessments of reading and speaking.

Frameworks for reading and speaking assessment are presented in **Chapter 2**. These frameworks highlight the importance of constructing and communicating meaning for a variety of purposes, and indicate how particular understandings, insights, skills, processes, and motivational factors contribute to effectiveness in reading and speaking.



ORAL READING

Chapter 3 examines achievement in oral reading, with particular emphasis on reading accuracy. Seven tasks related to reading in English. Averaged across 88 components of these tasks, 22 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded well. Three of the components were the three Reading Record tasks (fiction, non-fiction and non-book). On these major tasks, an average of 33 percent more year 8 than year 4 students were judged to be in the highest two of the six reading bands. These results



indicate very substantial progress in reading between year 4 and year 8.

Four years ago, results for the three Reading Record tasks showed substantial improvement in oral reading between 1996 and 2000 at year 4 level, with smaller improvement for year 8 students. The results with these tasks in 2004 show further worthwhile improvement on two of the tasks. Averaged across the three tasks, 56 percent of year 4 students in 2004 were judged to be in the two top reading bands, eight percent higher

than in 2000 and 24 percent higher than in 1996. At year 8 level, 64 percent of year 4 students were judged to be in the top reading band, eight higher than in 2000 and 13 higher than in 1996.

Two tasks involved reading in Māori. Averaged across 24 components of these tasks, 18 percent more year 8 than year 4 students read successfully in Māori. On a task used in both 2000 and 2004, there was no change in average performance for year 4 students, but an increase of seven percent for year 8 students.

READING COMPREHENSION

Chapter 4 features silent reading tasks, with a focus on reading comprehension.

Year 8 students demonstrated consistently higher levels of performance than year 4 students. Averaged across 147 components of 16 tasks, 21 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded with the components.

Averaged across 27 components of three silent reading trend tasks, year 4 students performed at the same level in 2004 as in 2000. For year 8 students, with 31 components of four trend tasks included, on average three percent fewer students succeeded with task components in 2004 than in 2000 – a small decline. It is not clear why the trends are different for oral reading and silent reading.



ORAL DESCRIPTIONS



Chapter 5 presents the results for seven tasks that involved students in giving oral descriptions. The performances of year 4 and year 8

students were compared on 66 task components. On average, 14 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded on these components.

Averaged across the 23 components of two tasks, there was no change in the performance of year 4 students between 2000 and 2004, but three percent

fewer year 8 students succeeded in 2004 than in 2000. A very similar trend pattern was found four years ago. Taken together, these results suggest no change in oral description skills for year 4 students over the eight years from 1996 to 2004, but a small decline for year 8 students.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Chapter 6 included 14 tasks that involved students in making oral presentations for various purposes: telling stories, developing and presenting puppet plays, presenting poems, talking on allocated topics, and developing and asking questions. The performances of year 4 and year 8 students were compared on 55 components of 13 tasks. On average, 10 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded on these components, but year 8 students scored lower than year 4 students on six components involving the expressive presentation of poems or plays.

Averaged across 23 components of five trend tasks, three percent more year 4 students in 2004 than 2000 scored well on the components than in 2000. This is a small increase, but

reflected increases on all five tasks. A different picture emerged for year 8 students. Averaged across the 23 task components, there was no change in performance between 2000 and 2004. However, this pattern was not consistent across tasks, with an average gain of six percent on the first three tasks and an average loss of 10 percent on the fourth and fifth tasks (which involved reading and presenting poems and showed a decline in performance on all eight components).



SURVEY

Chapter 7 presents the results of the reading and speaking surveys. These sought information from students about their involvement in reading and speaking activities, in school and beyond, and about their enjoyment of these activities.

Reading was fourth in popularity among 14 school subjects for year 4 students, but only ninth equal for year 8 students. The two favourite reading activities in school at both year levels were silent reading and listening to the teacher reading.

Year 4 students appeared to think about reading as a technical task, requiring learning hard words and listening to the teacher, whereas year 8 students placed greater emphasis on enjoying reading and choosing the right book.



Reading was a high preference leisure activity for only about one quarter of the students, but was rated as enjoyable by about three-quarters. More than 60 percent enjoyed reading fiction. Comics were second in popularity for year 4 students, followed closely by magazines (which gained substantially in the last four years). For year 8 students, magazines have overtaken fiction books in popularity, with these two choices well ahead of any other option.

More than 80 percent of year 4 and year 8 students were positive about their own competence in reading, reading at school, having their teacher read a story out loud, talking to a group in class, and going to a library.

There were some noteworthy changes from 2000 to 2004:

- the percentage of students who were very positive about how good they were at reading improved markedly, by 10 percent for year 4 and 11 percent for year 8;
- 18 percent fewer year 4 and 10 percent fewer year 8 students were very positive about their teacher reading a story aloud;
- 11 percent fewer year 4 and 10 percent fewer year 8 students were very positive about getting a book for a present;
- 13 percent fewer year 8 students were very positive about looking at books in a bookshop, or about going to a library.

PERFORMANCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUPS

Chapter 8 reports the results of analyses that compared the task performance and survey responses of different *demographic subgroups*.



School type (full primary or intermediate), school size, community size and geographic zone did not seem to be important factors predicting achievement on the reading and speaking tasks. The same was true for the 2000 and 1996 assessments. However, for year 4 students there were statistically significant differences in the performance of students from low, medium and high decile schools on 88 percent of the reading tasks (compared to 88 percent in 2000 and 71 percent in 1996), and 90 percent of the speaking tasks (compared to 87 percent in 2000 and 75 percent in 1996). There were also differences for year 8 students on 87 percent of the reading tasks (which compares with 58 percent in 2000 and 93 percent in 1996), and 86 percent of the speaking tasks (which compares with 56 percent in 2000 and 67 percent in 1996).

For the comparisons of boys with girls, Pakeha with Māori, Pakeha with Pasifika students, and students for whom the predominant language at home was English with those for whom it was not, effect sizes were used. Effect size is the difference in mean (average) performance of the two groups, divided by the pooled standard deviation of the scores on the particular task. For this summary, these effect sizes were averaged across tasks.

Girls averaged higher than boys on reading tasks, with a moderate mean effect size of 0.22 for year 4 students and a small mean effect size of 0.15 for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.25 and 0.10). The reading survey results showed that year 4 girls were markedly more enthusiastic about reading than year 4 boys, but there was little difference between year 8 girls and boys. On speaking tasks, the advantage of girls over boys was small, with mean effect sizes of 0.15 for year 4 students and 0.17 for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.24 and 0.06). These are small changes in disparity.

Pakeha students averaged higher than Māori students on the tasks involving reading in English, with a large mean effect size of 0.42 for year 4 students and a moderate effect size of 0.37 for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.63 and 0.35). This indicates a substantial reduction in disparity for year 4 students, but no change for year 8 students. Māori students averaged higher than Pakeha students on the two tasks involving reading in Māori, with a small mean effect size of 0.19 for year 4 students and a large mean effect size of 0.76

for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.35 and 0.79). Pakeha students performed better than Māori students on speaking tasks, with moderate mean effect sizes of 0.29 for year 4 students and 0.34 for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.41 for year 4 students and 0.35 for year 8 students). This indicates a slight reduction in disparity for year 4 students.

Pakeha students averaged higher than Pasifika students on the tasks involving reading in English, with a moderate mean effect size of 0.34 for year 4 students and a large mean effect size of 0.47 for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.64 and 0.60). This indicates a substantial reduction in disparity for year 4 students, with a small reduction for year 8 students. Pasifika students averaged higher than Pakeha students on the two tasks involving reading in Māori, with large mean effect sizes of 0.66 for year 4 students and 1.09 for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.47 and 1.12). Pakeha students performed better than Pasifika students on speaking tasks, with large mean effect sizes of 0.52 for year 4 students and 0.45 for year 8 students (the corresponding figures in 2000 were 0.77 and 0.47, but these were based on a more restricted range of tasks).

Compared to students for whom the predominant language spoken at home was not English, students for whom the predominant language at home was English scored higher at both year levels on tasks involving reading and speaking in English. For reading in English, there was a moderate mean effect size of 0.29 for year 4 students and a small mean effect size of 0.18 for year 8 students. The corresponding figures for speaking tasks were 0.28 and 0.21, both moderate mean effect sizes. The students for whom the predominant language at home was not English scored higher at both year levels on the two tasks involving reading in Māori, with a large mean effect size of 0.42 for year 4 students and a moderate mean effect size of 0.26 for year 8 students. No corresponding effect sizes from 2000 are available for any of these comparisons.

