



The national curriculum statement, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, says students should be able to engage with and enjoy language in all its varieties. They should be able to understand, respond to, and use oral, written and visual language effectively in a variety of contexts.

Language is broad and pervasive. It is at the heart of learning, life and cultures. Because it is central to intellectual, emotional and social development it has an essential role throughout the school curriculum. There is seldom a time or place in any learning area where it is not present.

Language and Communication

A key purpose of language is communication. Through language we are able to communicate with others



for a variety of purposes. Language allows us to share knowledge, experiences, information, feelings and ideas. It also helps us to examine and give meaning to our own and others' experiences and ideas.

Communication through language involves connections and interactions between messages that are given and received. We produce messages by speaking, writing and presenting. We consume messages by listening, reading and viewing. The action of one dimension typically leads to responses in another.

Relationships Within and Beyond Language as a Learning Area

Because language is essentially an interactive process, the oral, written and visual forms are highly



interrelated. Listening, for example, may require watching someone's body language to understand fully the overall communication. When listening to and watching a demonstration or dramatic performance, there will often be visual elements that add important meaning to what is said and listened to. Skilful reading enables the reader to obtain information, to appreciate the feelings of others, to reflect upon ideas, experiences and opinions, and to gain imaginative and aesthetic pleasure. Skilful writing enables the writer to convey information, to express feelings, to record, clarify and reflect on ideas, experiences or opinions, and to give imaginative and aesthetic pleasure.

The idea of interrelationships is even greater when language, in its different

forms, is applied throughout and beyond the curriculum. Much of the learning that takes place in mathematics or social studies, for example, is inescapably language dependent. Our day-to-day transactions of personal and social activity rely heavily on language and its communicative powers. For these reasons, society and schools have a major responsibility for giving students a good command of language and the ability to use it effectively to convey and understand meanings.

Characteristics within Language Components

Accepting the connections that exist within and beyond the components of language, it is recognised that there are particular skills that have special and distinctive relevance within each component. The New Zealand English curriculum reminds us that effective writing involves the development of an explicit knowledge of the steps of the writing process, such as forming intentions, composing, drafting, correcting and publishing. Students should learn to understand and use accurately the conventions of

written language, especially in formal contexts, and to write confidently, clearly and appropriately, in a range of styles and for a variety of purposes.

Assessment of Language Components

One of the purposes of national monitoring is to find out and report on what students know and can do in relation to important learning outcomes. Since language and communication is an extensive domain, it requires organised treatment for assessment and reporting. Within the four-year programme of monitoring, the Project has chosen an arrangement that focuses on speaking and reading in one year, and listening, viewing and writing in another. On each occasion the emphasis is on understandings and skills that are particularly relevant within, and to some extent between, the respective components. This treatment of the language domain is not intended to suggest that each component represents a separate or isolated curricular experience, but rather to acknowledge the distinctive learning skills of each.

Writing

Children first encounter language and learn to use and interpret it in its oral and visual forms well before they commence formal education. The development of their language from quite basic beginnings through to more sophisticated constructions results from increasingly rich and complex opportunities and interactions in personal, social and cultural settings. These experiences lead to understandings about the meanings, effects and consequences of what is heard and seen, and help children gain greater control over their environment.

Frameworks for National Monitoring Assessment

National monitoring task frameworks are developed with the Project's curriculum advisory panels. These frameworks have two key purposes. They provide a valuable guideline structure for the development and selection of tasks, and they bring into focus those important dimensions of the learning domains which are arguably the basis for valid analyses of

NEMP WRITING FRAMEWORK

CENTRAL ORGANISING THEME

Creating, constructing and communicating meaning in written forms for various purposes and audiences.

UNDERSTANDINGS

- Writing is used for a variety of purposes.
- Purposes and audiences influence form and style.
- Written language differs in structure and style from spoken language.
- Writing is a process of thinking, drafting and reworking.
- Conventions of writing are required for effective communication.
- Writing is enriched by personal experience, knowledge and insights.
- Writing proficiency is supported through rich experiences of oral language and reading.
- Writing proficiency is aided by a responsive audience.
- Writing proficiency is enhanced through talking about writing using specialised language.

PURPOSES

To inform, entertain, reflect, enquire and persuade through:

- story telling
- exploring thoughts and ideas
- expressing feelings
- expressing opinions
- retelling
- entertaining
- describing
- explaining
- directing
- questioning
- requesting
- recording
- reporting
- letter writing
- form filling
- note taking
- summarising

SKILLS

PLANNING

- establishing a purpose
- choosing a topic and generating ideas
- identifying an audience
- selecting suitable form

COMPOSING

- selecting, developing and organising ideas
- structuring ideas appropriately (e.g. in sentences and paragraphs)
- using appropriate language features and text structure
- selecting and using appropriate words
- drafting and revising
- deciding on headings

EDITING

- checking for:
 - sense
 - appropriateness
 - conventions of:
 - spelling
 - punctuation
 - grammar

PRESENTING

- layout
- handwriting

MOTIVATION

- enthusiasm for writing
- voluntary engagement in writing
- commitment to being a good writer

students' knowledge, understandings and skills.

The assessment frameworks are organising tools which interrelate understandings with skills and processes. They are intended to be flexible and broad enough to encourage and enable the development of tasks that lead to meaningful descriptions of what students know and can do. They are also designed to help ensure a balanced representation of important learning outcomes.

The framework for writing has a central organising theme supported by three interrelated aspects. The theme, "Creating, constructing and communicating meaning in written forms for various purposes and audiences", is consistent with the central themes for assessment of other components of language. Each highlights the centrality and fundamental importance of meaning.

The understandings aspect of the framework summarises important ideas about the actions, impact and consequences of ways in which messages might be created, shaped, communicated, interpreted and used.

The purposes aspect identifies some of the major contexts in which writing is applied.

The skills aspect lists key abilities that students could be expected to demonstrate while engaging in writing for particular purposes. Performance of these skills is strongly related to demonstrations of ideas listed in the understandings aspect.

The motivation aspect of the framework draws attention to the importance of having information about students' interests, attitudes, confidence and involvement in their writing activities, both within and beyond the school setting. Educational research and practice confirm the impact of student motivation and attitudes on progress and learning outcomes.



The Choice of Tasks for National Monitoring

The choice of tasks for national monitoring is guided by a number of educational and practical considerations. Uppermost in any decisions relating to the choice or administration of a task is the central consideration of validity and the effect that a whole range of decisions can have on this key attribute. Tasks are chosen because they provide a good representation of important knowledge and skills, but also because they meet a number of requirements to do with their administration and presentation. For example:

- each task with its associated materials needs to be structured to ensure a high level of consistency in the way it is presented by specially trained teacher administrators to students of wide-ranging backgrounds and abilities, and in diverse settings throughout New Zealand;
- tasks need to span the expected range of capabilities of year 4 and 8 students and to allow the most able students to show the extent of their abilities while also giving the least able the opportunity to show what they can do;
- materials for tasks need to be sufficiently portable, economical, safe and within the handling capabilities of students. Task materials also need to have meaning for students;
- the time needed for completing an individual task has to be balanced against the total time available for all of the assessment tasks, without denying students sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities;
- each task needs to be capable of sustaining the attention and effort of students if they are to produce responses that truly indicate what they know and can do. Since neither the student nor the school receives immediate or specific feedback on performance, the motivational potential of the assessment is critical;
- tasks need to avoid unnecessary bias on the grounds of gender, culture or social background while accepting that it is appropriate to have tasks that reflect the interests of particular groups within the community.

Writing Assessment Tasks

Thirty-five writing tasks were administered, using four different approaches. Four were administered in one-to-one interview settings. Twenty tasks were attempted in a stations arrangement, where students worked independently on a series of tasks. Nine were administered using a paper-and-pencil approach in an "independent" session, and one was administered in a team approach (to groups of up to four children working collaboratively). The final task was attempted over three different assessment sessions, but essentially involved an independent approach.

Twenty-eight of the 35 tasks were the same for both year 4 and year 8. Two tasks were administered only to year 4 students, and five tasks only to year 8 students.

Trend Tasks

Fifteen of the tasks were used previously, entirely or in part, in the 2002 writing assessments. These were called *link* tasks in the 2002 report, but were not described in detail to avoid any distortions in the 2006 results that might have occurred if the tasks had been widely available for use in schools since 2002. In the current report, these tasks are called *trend* tasks, and are used to examine trends in student performance: whether they have improved, stayed constant or declined over the four-year period since the 2002 assessments.

Link Tasks

To allow similar comparisons between the 2006 and 2010 assessments, 17 of the tasks used for the first time in 2006 have been designated link tasks. Results of student performance on these tasks are presented in this report, but the tasks are described only in general terms because they are expected to be used again in 2010.

Marking Methods

The students' responses were assessed using specially designed marking procedures. The marking criteria used had been developed in advance by Project staff, but were sometimes modified as a result of issues raised during the marking. Tasks that required marker judgement and were common to year 4 and year 8 were intermingled during marking sessions, with the goal of ensuring that the same scoring standards and procedures were used for both. Similarly, where the marking of trend tasks required substantial marker judgement, specially selected representative samples of the 2002 performances were re-marked, intermingled with the 2006 performances. This helped to ensure that the trend information would be trustworthy, unaffected by changes in marking standards between 2002 and 2006.



Task-by-Task Reporting

National monitoring assessment is reported task by task so that results can be understood in relation to what the students were asked to do.



Access Tasks

Teachers and principals have expressed considerable interest in access to NEMP task materials and marking instructions, so that they can use them within their own schools. Some are interested in comparing the performance of their own students to national results on some aspects of the curriculum, while others want to use tasks as models of good practice. Some would like to modify tasks to suit their own purposes, while others want to follow the original procedures as closely as possible. There is obvious merit in making available carefully developed tasks that are seen to be highly valid and useful for assessing student learning.



Some of the tasks in this report cannot be made available in this way. Link tasks must be saved for use in four years' time, and other tasks use copyright or expensive resources that cannot be duplicated by NEMP and provided economically to schools. There are also limitations on how precisely a school's administration and marking of tasks can mirror the ways that they are administered and marked by the Project. Nevertheless, a substantial number of tasks are suitable to duplicate for teachers and schools. In this report, these access tasks are identified with the symbol above, and can be purchased in a kit from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (P.O. Box 3237, Wellington 6140, New Zealand).

Teachers are also encouraged to use the NEMP website to access tasks and results (<http://nemp.otago.ac.nz>).

How to Read the Tasks and Results



ABOUT THE TASK

WHAT THE STUDENTS READ OR HEARD (BLUE) MARKING CRITERIA (RED)

PERFORMANCE PATTERNS

The content, instructions and key resources are shown for each task, as they were presented to the students. Bold, blue text is an instruction to the teacher administrator. The students' results are shown in red.

Trend Task: Octopus

Approach: Station Year: 4 & 8

Focus: Completing a story

Resources: Pictures in recording book

Questions / instructions:

The pictures on the next pages show the story of a family at the beach. They are collecting mussels.

First, have a look at each part of the story.

Tell the story by writing in the speech bubbles what the people are saying.

How many individual speeches fitted with pictures? (11 in total)

	year 4	year 8
all or most	85 (84)	95 (93)
about half of them	12 (12)	5 (6)
few or none	3 (4)	0 (1)

Extent to which series of speeches told the story:

	year 4	year 8
very well	32 (13)	47 (39)
quite well	50 (52)	45 (48)
slightly	16 (33)	8 (12)
not at all	2 (2)	0 (1)

Extent to which series of speeches sounded like an interactive conversation:

	year 4	year 8
high	60 (36)	73 (57)
moderate	33 (50)	25 (35)
low	7 (14)	2 (8)

Writing conventions followed:

	year 4	year 8
consistently	8 (0)	23 (23)
about half of time	25 (22)	37 (30)
rarely or never	67 (78)	40 (47)

Total score:

Score Range	year 4	year 8
8-9	18 (5)	40 (34)
6-7	45 (36)	40 (36)
4-5	26 (42)	17 (23)
0-3	11 (17)	3 (7)

Sub-group Analyses:

Year 4

Score Range	Boys	Girls	Pakeha	Māori	Pasifika
8-9	14%	23%	21%	7%	24%
6-7	43%	47%	45%	50%	35%
4-5	32%	19%	26%	23%	24%
0-3	11%	11%	8%	20%	17%

Year 8

Score Range	Boys	Girls	Pakeha	Māori	Pasifika
8-9	30%	53%	42%	26%	52%
6-7	45%	33%	40%	47%	22%
4-5	20%	12%	16%	24%	14%
0-3	5%	2%	2%	3%	12%

Commentary:

Most students met the core expressive requirements of this task very well or quite well but fewer followed writing conventions well. There was substantial improvement from 2002 to 2006 for year 4 students and a little improvement for year 8 students. Girls and Pasifika students were prominent among the high scores, especially at year 8 level. Pasifika students had a wide range of performance.

Students did this task on their own at a "station", writing their own answers. See page 7 for descriptions of all four approaches used.

What this task was aiming to evaluate.

The resources used in this task.

- 50% of the year 4 students in 2006 told the story quite well in their series of speeches.
- 52% of the year 4 students in 2002 told the story quite well in their series of speeches.
- 45% of the year 8 students in 2006 told the story quite well in their series of speeches.
- 48% of the year 8 students in 2002 told the story quite well in their series of speeches.

The total score is created by adding those marking criteria that seem to capture best the overall task performance. For some tasks this is all of the criteria but for others, it is just one or two of the criteria.

Performance patterns for boys and girls; Māori, Pasifika and Pakeha students, based on their total scores on the task. Note that Pakeha is defined as everyone not included in Māori or Pasifika.

Comments that assist with interpreting the results.