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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 know, think and 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, 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 materials. Their responses are presented orally, by demonstration, in writing, in computer files, or through 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 2003. Because some tasks have now been used twice, in 1999 and again in 2003, trends in performance across the four-year period can also be analysed and reported.

In 2003, the first year of the third cycle of national monitoring, three areas were assessed: science, visual arts, and the use of graphs, tables and maps. This report presents details and results of the assessments of students' knowledge, skills and ideas in the visual arts. It is important to note that, for the purposes of this report, 'art' is understood to be visual art.

ASSESSING THE VISUAL ARTS

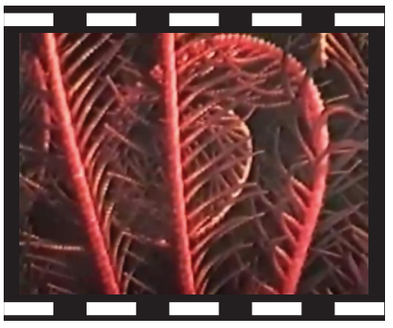
Visual Arts is that part of the curriculum which offers opportunities for developing abilities of personal and social expression through a range of media, forms and techniques. Education in the visual arts is also concerned with developing an appreciation and understanding of the art of others, the ways art works are looked at, thought about, used and valued. A framework for visual arts education and its assessment is presented in **Chapter 2.** This framework lists important approaches, skills and attitudes appropriate to the two main content strands of making art and knowing about art.

MAKING ART

Chapter 3 examines achievement relating to making art. The six tasks used in this section covered processes of observational drawing, creative expressive picture making, printmaking and clay modelling.

Averaged across all six tasks, the mean score on the six point global rating scale (0 low – 5 high) for year 4 was 1.3 compared to 2.0 for year 8 students. This result indicates some overall improvement of skills in the four-year period. The largest gap in the mean global ratings occurred in the observational pencil drawing task where the difference between year 4 and year 8 was 1.0. The smallest gap occurred in the printmaking task where the difference was 0.2.

Two trend tasks were administered to year 4 and year 8 students in both the 1999 and 2003 assessments. In the painting task there was a very small improvement in the mean global rating at year 8 between 1999 and 2003, whereas there was a very small decline at year 4. In the collage task there were small declines in the mean global ratings between 1999 and 2003 at both year 4 and year 8. These small differences amount to little change of any note over the four-year cycle.



RESPONDING TO ART

Chapter 4 examines achievement relating to responding to art. The 12 tasks reported in this chapter involved students responding to a variety of art works, most of which were represented in photographic reproductions. The tasks asked students to examine and describe content, style and imagery. They also asked students to identify media and processes used in the making of artworks, and to express a personal response to observed images. Eleven of the tasks were administered in one-to-one interviews, and one in a team approach.

While it is not appropriate to collapse data from across all 12 responding tasks for purposes of comparing the overall performances of year 4 and year 8 students, the results in all tasks show a general pattern of improvement in knowledge and skills from year 4 to year 8. In many instances this improvement is quite modest.

The two trend tasks (Warriors and Soldiers, and Art Objects) were administered to year 4 and year 8 students in both the 1999 and 2003 assessments. While the results for Warriors and Soldiers show a few minor differences from 1999 to 2003, particularly at year 8, the general pattern of scores has been maintained. The results for Art Objects generally show a number of small differences from 1999 to 2003 at both year 4 and year 8. Overall, the pattern of performance has changed little over the four-year period.

ART SURVEY

Chapter 5 presents the results of the visual arts survey, which sought information from students about their curriculum preferences, their engagement in visual arts activities, and their perceptions of their achievement and potential in the visual arts.

Students were asked to select their three favourite school subjects from a list of 14 subjects. For year 4 students, visual arts was the second most popular preference (after physical education). With drama and dance added to the subject list used in the 1999 survey, percentage preferences are not directly comparable, but it is noteworthy that visual arts has dropped in the "top three" support from 80 percent of students in 1999 to 41 percent of students in 2003. In the corresponding results for year 8 students, visual arts was the third most popular subject (following physical education and technology). The number choosing visual arts in 2003 was 24 percent lower than the percentage choosing "art" in 1999.

Year 4 results suggest that visual arts remains a popular activity, with about 75 percent of students choosing the highest rating for their enjoyment of visual arts at school, and wanting more. At year 8, the 2003 results are similar to those for 1999. There appear to be small declines in the popularity of visual arts at school and in the desire for additional art at school, but about 50 percent still give high ratings on both issues (higher than for most subjects in other NEMP surveys at year 8 level).

At year 4, the most notable changes from the 1999 results were moderate increases in the percentages of students who said they didn't know how good they were in visual arts, or how their teacher or parent viewed their ability in the visual arts.

Computer graphics was included in the survey for the first time in 2003. Thirty-six percent of year 4 students and 29 percent of year 8 students reported using this medium at school "heaps" or "quite a lot" – more than printmaking, collage, carving, model making, clay, and fabrics, with which experience was quite limited.

PERFORMANCE OF SUBGROUPS

Chapter 6 reports the results of analyses that compared the performance of different demographic subgroups. School size, school type (full primary or intermediate), geographic zone and community size did not seem to be important factors predicting achievement on the visual arts tasks. However, there were statistically significant differences in the performances of students in low, medium and high decile schools on a third of the tasks at year 4, and on half of the tasks at year 8. These differences predominated in the responding tasks.

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 year 4 students, the difference between boys and girls across the 18 tasks was negligible. There were statistically significant differences on two of the 18 tasks: girls performed better on one, boys on the other.

For year 8 students, girls performed a little better than boys, with an average effect size of 0.09. In other words, on average girls scored about one tenth of a standard deviation higher than boys – a very small advantage. There were statistically significant differences on three of the 17 tasks, with girls performing better on all three tasks.

In earlier NEMP reports, the performance of Māori students was compared to that of all other students. Starting with the 2003 reports, three groups are now distinguished: Māori students, Pasifika students, and all other students (described as Pakeha students). This change prevents satisfactory direct comparisons with the results from 1999.

Year 4 and year 8 Pakeha students scored statistically significantly higher than Māori students on 39 percent of tasks (all of which were responding to art tasks at year 4, while one was a making task and six were responding tasks at year 8). Average effect sizes of 0.31 for year 4, and 0.27 for year 8 show moderate differences between the achievement of Pakeha and Māori students. The differences were smaller on making tasks than on responding tasks.

Year 4 and year 8 Pakeha students scored statistically significantly

higher than Pasifika students on 44 percent of tasks (all of which were responding tasks at year 4, while two were making and six were responding tasks at year 8). Average effect sizes of 0.37 for year 4 and 0.42 for year 8 show moderate to larger differences between the achievement of Pakeha and Pasifika students, comprised of small differences on making tasks, and large differences on responding tasks.

Compared to students for whom the predominant language at home was English, students from homes where other languages predominated scored statistically lower on 22 percent of year 4 tasks, increasing to 33 percent for year 8 tasks. The corresponding mean effect sizes were 0.26 for both

levels, which can be described as moderate. There were small differences on making tasks and moderate to large differences on responding tasks.