

Te Kaupapa Aroturuki Mātauranga ā-Motu – The National Education Monitoring Project

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This chapter presents a concise outline of the rationale and operating procedures for national monitoring, together with some information about the reactions of participants in the 2003 assessments. Detailed information about the samples of students and schools is available in the Appendix (p78).

Purpose of National Monitoring

The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993, p26) states that the purpose of national monitoring is *to provide information on how well overall national standards are being maintained, and where improvements might be needed.*

The focus of the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) is on the educational achievements and attitudes of New Zealand primary and intermediate school children. NEMP provides a national “snapshot” of children’s knowledge, skills and motivation, and a way to identify which aspects are improving, staying constant, or declining. This information allows successes to be celebrated and priorities for curriculum change and teacher development to be debated more effectively, with the goal of helping to improve the education which children receive.

Assessment procedures and tasks are selected to provide a rich picture of what children can do and to optimise value to the educational community. The result is a quite detailed national picture of student achievement. It is neither feasible nor appropriate, given the purpose and the approach used, to release information about individual students or schools.

Class Level

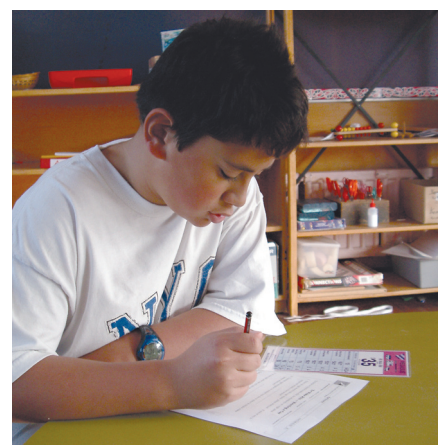
National monitoring in Māori medium education assesses and reports what year 8 children (ages 12-13) know and can do.

National Samples of Students

National monitoring information is gathered using a carefully selected random sample of 120 students, from 13 Māori immersion schools, rather than all year 8 Māori medium students. This represents about 20 percent of all year 8 students in Māori medium schools.

Sets of Tasks

So that a considerable amount of information can be gathered without placing too many demands on individual students, different students attempt different tasks. The 120 students in the Māori immersion



sample are divided into two groups of 60 students, with each group attempting a different set of tasks.

Timing of Assessments

The assessments take place in the second half of the school year, between October and November. Each student participates in about four hours of assessment activities spread over one week.

Specially Trained Teacher Administrators

The assessments are conducted by four experienced, Māori medium teachers. They are selected from a national pool of applicants, attend a week of specialist training in Dunedin led by senior Project staff, and then

work in pairs to conduct assessments of 60 children over five weeks. Their employing school is fully-funded by the Project to employ a relief teacher during their secondment.

Four-year Assessment Cycle

Each year, the assessments cover about one quarter of the areas within the national curriculum for primary schools. The *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* is the blueprint for the school curriculum. It places emphasis on seven essential learning areas, eight essential skills and a variety of attitudes and values. National monitoring aims to address all of these areas, rather than restrict itself to pre-selected priority areas.

For Māori medium, the first four-year cycle of NEMP assessments began in 1999 and was completed in 2002. The second cycle ran from 2003. The areas covered each year and the reports produced are listed opposite the contents page of this report.

About 45 percent of the tasks are kept constant from one cycle to the next. This re-use of tasks allows trends in achievement across a four-year interval to be observed and reported.

Important Learning Outcomes Assessed

The assessment tasks emphasise aspects of the curriculum which are particularly important to life in our community, and which are likely to be of enduring importance to students. Care is taken to achieve balanced coverage of important skills, knowledge and understandings within the various curriculum strands, but without attempting to slavishly follow the finer details of current curriculum statements. Such details change from time to time, whereas national monitoring needs to take a long-term perspective if it is to achieve its goals.

Wide Range of Task Difficulty

National monitoring aims to show what students know and can do. Because children at any particular class level vary greatly in educational development, tasks spanning multiple



levels of the curriculum need to be included if all children are to enjoy some success and all children are to experience some challenge. Many tasks include several aspects, progressing from aspects most children can handle well to aspects that are more challenging.

Engaging Task Approaches

Special care is taken to use tasks and approaches that interest students and stimulate them to do their best. Students' individual efforts are not reported and have no obvious consequences for them. This means that worthwhile and engaging tasks are needed to ensure that students' results represent their capabilities rather than their level of motivation. One helpful factor is that extensive use is made of equipment and supplies that allow students to be involved in "hands-on" activities. Presenting some of the tasks on video or computer also allows the use of richer stimulus material, and standardises the presentation of those tasks.

Positive Student Reactions to Tasks

At the conclusion of each assessment session, students complete evaluation forms in which they identify tasks that they particularly enjoyed and tasks that did not appeal. Averaged across all tasks in the 2003 assessments, 77 percent of the Māori medium students indicated that they particularly enjoyed the tasks.



Appropriate Support for Students

A key goal in Project planning is to minimise the extent to which student strengths or weaknesses in one area of the curriculum might unduly influence their assessed performance in other areas. For instance, skills in reading and writing often play a key role in success or failure in paper-and-pencil tests in areas such as science, social studies, or even mathematics. In national monitoring, many tasks are presented orally by teachers, on videotape, or on computer. Similarly, many answers are given orally or by demonstration rather than in writing. Where reading or writing skills are required to perform tasks in areas other than reading and writing, teachers are happy to help students to understand these tasks or to communicate their responses. Teachers are working with no more than four students at a time, so are readily available to help individuals.

To free teachers further to concentrate on providing appropriate guidance and help to students, so that the students achieve their best efforts, teachers are not asked to record judgments on the work the students are doing. All marking and analysis is done later, when the students' work has reached the Project office in Dunedin. Some of the work comes on paper, but much of it arrives recorded on videotape. In 2003, about half of the students' work came in that form. The video recordings give a detailed picture of what both the student and teacher did and said, allowing rich analysis of both process and task achievement.

Four Task Approaches Used

In 2003, four task approaches were used. Each student was expected to spend about an hour working in each format. The four approaches were:

- *One-to-one interview.* Each student worked individually with a teacher, with the whole session recorded on videotape.
- *Stations.* Four students, working independently, moved around a series of stations where tasks had been set up. This session was not videotaped.
- *Team and independent.* Four students worked collaboratively, supervised by a teacher, on some tasks. This was recorded on videotape. The students then worked individually on some paper-and-pencil tasks.
- *Art-making.* Four students, supervised by a teacher, worked individually on two art-making tasks. For one task, their clay sculptures were recorded on videotape together with an interview about the sculpture.

Professional Development Benefits for Teacher Administrators

The teacher administrators reported that they found their training and assessment work very stimulating and professionally enriching. Working so closely with interesting tasks

administered to 60 children in at least five schools offered valuable insights. Some teachers have reported major changes in their teaching and assessment practices as a result of their experiences working with the Project.

Marking Arrangements

The marking and analysis of the students' work occurred in Dunedin. The marking process included extensive discussion of initial examples and careful checks of the consistency of marking by different markers.

Tasks which can be marked objectively or with modest amounts of professional experience were marked by senior tertiary students, most of whom had completed two or three years of pre-service preparation for primary school teaching. The tasks that require higher levels of professional judgement are marked by teachers, selected from throughout New Zealand.

Where students responded at some length in te reo Māori, orally or in writing, the marking criteria were described in English but markers skilled in te reo applied comparable criteria to the answers in te reo Māori. Those comparable criteria were not usually recorded and so cannot be presented here.

Analysis of Results

The results are analysed and reported task by task. Because of the small numbers of students in the sample, no analysis by subgroups (such as boys and girls) is included in this report.

Funding Arrangements

National monitoring is funded by the Ministry of Education, and organised by the Educational Assessment Research Unit at the University of Otago, under the direction of Associate Professor Terry Crooks and Lester Flockton. The contract currently runs until 2007. The cost is about \$3 million per year, less than one tenth of a percent of the budget allocation for primary and secondary education. Almost half of the funding is used to pay for the time and expenses of the teachers who assist with the assessments as task developers, teacher administrators or markers.



Reviews by International Scholars

In June 1996, three scholars from the United States and England, with distinguished international reputations in the field of educational assessment, accepted an invitation from the Project directors to visit the Project. They conducted a thorough review of the progress of the Project, with particular attention to the procedures and tasks used in 1995 and the results emerging. At the end of their review, they prepared a report which concluded as follows:

The National Education Monitoring Project is well conceived and admirably implemented. Decisions about design, task development, scoring, and reporting have been made thoughtfully. The work is of exceptionally high quality and displays considerable originality. We believe that the project has considerable potential for advancing the understanding of and public debate about the educational achievement of New Zealand students. It may also serve as a model for national and/or state monitoring in other countries.

(Professors Paul Black, Michael Kane & Robert Linn, 1996)

A further review was conducted late in 1998 by another distinguished panel (Professors Elliot Eisner, Caroline Gipps and Wynne Harlen). Amid very helpful suggestions for further refinements and investigations, they commented that:

We want to acknowledge publicly that the overall design of NEMP is very well thought through.....The vast majority of tasks are well designed, engaging to students and consistent with good assessment principles in making clear to students what is expected of them.

Further Information

A more extended description of national monitoring, including detailed information about task development procedures, is available in:

Flockton, L. (1999). *School-wide Assessment: National Education Monitoring Project*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.