

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



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 2005 assessments. Detailed information about the sample of students and schools is available in the Appendix (p66).

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 and reporting procedures are designed to provide a rich picture of what children can do and thus to optimise value to the educational community. The result is a 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 96 students, from 12 Māori immersion schools, rather than all year 8 Māori medium students. This represents about 15 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, students in each school are divided into two groups with each group completing a different set of tasks.

Timing of Assessments

The assessments took place in the second half of Term 3 in 2005. Each student participated in about four hours of assessment activities spread over one week.

YEAR		NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM	
1	2003 (1999)	Science Visual Arts Information Skills: <i>graphs, tables, maps, charts & diagrams</i>	Communication skills Problem-solving skills Self-management and competitive skills Social and cooperative skills Work and study skills Attitudes
2	2004 (2000)	Language: <i>reading and speaking</i> Aspects of Technology Music	
3	2005 (2001)	Mathematics: <i>numeracy skills</i> Social Studies Information Skills: <i>library, research</i>	
4	2006 (2002)	Language: <i>writing, listening, viewing</i> Health and Physical Education	

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, with each pair conducting assessments with 48 children in six schools over a six-week period. 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.

For the Māori medium education assessments, trend reporting will begin in 2010. Trend reporting earlier than that would not be appropriate because Māori medium classes, as well as Māori medium schools, were included until the 2005 assessments.

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 follow slavishly 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 less straightforward.

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 which 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.

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 mathematics. In national monitoring, a majority of tasks are presented orally by teachers, on video, or on computer, and most 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 as well as they can, teachers are not asked to record judgements 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 2005, about half of the students' work came in that form, on a total of about 125 videotapes. The video recordings give a detailed picture of

what students and teachers did and said, allowing rich analysis of both process and task achievement.

Four Task Approaches Used

In 2005, 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.* Four students worked collaboratively, supervised by a teacher, on some tasks. This session was recorded on videotape.
- *Independent.* Four students worked independently, supervised by a teacher, on some paper-and-pencil tasks. This was not videotaped.

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 with children from six 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

For the 2005 assessments, the marking and analysis of the students' work was undertaken by He Kupenga Hao i te Reo in Palmerston North. The marking process included extensive discussion of initial examples and careful checks of the consistency of marking by different markers.

Analysis of Results

The results are analysed and reported task by task. The emphasis is on the overall national picture, and comparison of sub-groups (e.g. girls/boys) is not possible because of the small sample size.

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 Professor Terry Crooks and Lester Flockton. The current contract 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.