EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
TE TARI AROTAKE MATAURANGA

Managing Professional Learning and Development in Primary Schools

January 2009

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter

Foreword

ERO's whakataukī demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into early childhood services and schools, giving us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country. We collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies.

In this report and its companion report for primary schools our focus has been on how well schools manage professional learning and development for the people whose skills and training are most fundamental to the achievement of students – classroom teachers. Effective professional learning and development is the most important investment school boards of trustees and principals can make to build the knowledge of their teachers and raise the achievement of their students.

Successful delivery in education relies on many people and organisations across the community working together for the benefit of children and young people. We hope the information in ERO's evaluations will help them in their task.

Graham Stoop
Chief Review Officer

May 2009

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OVERVIEW

Overview

Teaching is a complex and demanding profession. Teachers require high quality support and training throughout their careers to ensure they have the strategies and skills to meet the needs of learners. Professional learning and development (PLD) is central to maintaining and improving teacher quality.

This is one of two national reports by the Education Review Office (ERO) on how well schools manage teachers' PLD. This one about PLD in primary schools and the other is on secondary schools.

PLD refers to all the formal and informal processes used to improve the knowledge and practice of teachers. It includes more formal and specifically structured courses and initiatives as well as less formal collaboration and discussion between colleagues. The central purposes of professional learning and development are to improve the quality of teaching and to improve student outcomes.

While many different forms of training and development are undertaken by teachers, (including training to update curriculum knowledge or to develop particular technical skills), improving what happens in the classroom is the dominant rationale for PLD.

This report discusses how well primary schools:
• plan for PLD;
• build a culture in which teachers learn and develop; and
• monitor the effectiveness of teachers' learning and development.

There is a wide variation in the quality of PLD programmes and management. Using a consistent set of indicators based largely on the *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration*,[1] ERO found that schools fell into three groups based on their ability to develop and manage a high quality PLD programme.

Thirty-eight percent of primary schools demonstrated the characteristics of high quality PLD management. These schools aligned their PLD with well-informed school priorities. They had a school culture in which professional learning was fostered and supported by school leaders. These schools had self-review systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of their PLD investment on improving the quality of teaching and student outcomes.

Another 40 percent of schools shared some common aspects with the schools that managed their PLD well. There were, however, differences in the effectiveness of their decision-making and in the level of teachers' involvement in and commitment to planned professional development. Schools in this group were unlikely to have sound systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of PLD on the quality of teaching and improved student outcomes.

PLD was not well managed in 22 percent of schools. There were many areas in these schools where systems and processes could be improved. Although most teachers in these schools had some form of professional development, this was generally reactive and had limited links to identified priorities. PLD programmes were generally based on the availability of courses or initiatives, and lacked a good mix of needs-based and facilitated professional learning. Poorly developed self review-systems hampered the ability of these schools to determine the effectiveness of their programmes.

The key challenges faced by schools included: taking on too many PLD programmes or initiatives at one time; problems associated with the availability and quality of facilitators; not considering strategies and perspectives to help Māori and Pacific students to learn; and not allocating sufficient time to embed new practices in day-to-day classroom teaching. For small, relatively isolated schools, there were constraints associated with accessibility and costs of professional development.

The quality of PLD management is central to the benefit teachers derive from the learning opportunities made available to them. Schools with good systems to manage PLD can demonstrate the impact their programmes are having on improved teacher practice and student outcomes. However, variability in the quality of PLD management signals a place for guidelines to support schools in managing their PLD programmes.

Recommendations

SCHOOLS

ERO recommends that principals and senior managers:

- assess the quality of their management of professional learning and development with reference to the findings discussed in this report;
- develop a vision and plan for professional learning and development that is aligned with school planning priorities and has a focus on improving teaching and learning;
- establish a system to embed and sustain new practice; and
- review and/or establish a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's professional learning and development programmes.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education consider producing guidelines to support primary schools in their management of professional learning and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Teacher development has been an important focus area for educational research in recent years. In New Zealand, the publication of the Ministry of Education's *Best Evidence Synthesis: Quality Teaching for Diverse Learners (BES)* (2002) and the earlier work of John Hattie[2] has helped to emphasise the importance of teacher quality and its role in improving student achievement.

Improving student achievement outcomes is a priority for all who are involved in teaching. The learning context in schools is constantly changing, and teachers need to be able to adapt their teaching practices to meet the changing needs of their students. The level and quality of teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities directly affect how well they carry out their classroom teaching.

Well-structured and managed professional learning and development (PLD) is an important lever for improving teacher practice and outcomes. It gives teachers vital opportunities to update their content knowledge and teaching pedagogies. Teachers are able to understand the need to change, and how to implement changes in ways that will help their students to learn better.

PROFESSIONAL 'LEARNING' AND PROFESSIONAL 'DEVELOPMENT'

Until recently the term 'professional development' was commonly used in New Zealand schools as a catch-all phrase for the various training courses and initiatives used to extend teachers' knowledge and practice.[3] While this term is still used, it is now frequently coupled with the term 'professional learning.'

Professional learning is a broader concept that refers to what teachers have gained (actually learnt) from their formal professional development, while acknowledging that teachers also acquire knowledge and understanding in informal ways. Teachers get better at teaching through various formal and informal forms of feedback, discussion, reflection and action. The phrase *Professional Learning and Development* captures this complexity and reflects the diverse ways in which teachers develop their skills, abilities and approaches for the benefit of students.

TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT UNDERTAKEN BY PRIMARY TEACHERS

Primary school teachers undertake many different types of PLD and there are many ways that teachers can work together informally to improve their skills and knowledge. Examples of informal professional learning activities include seeking, providing or receiving feedback from a colleague on teaching practice or new teaching materials, reading relevant educational research and discussing with colleagues different teaching strategies to use with students.

2   For example: John Hattie (1999). *Influences on student learning.* Inaugural Lecture: Professor of Education, University of Auckland. Retrieved August 2, 1999 from http://www.teacherstoolbox.co.uk/downloads/managers/Influencesonstudent.pdf

3   The term *in-service training* has also been used to describe professional learning and development.

Formal PLD activities include out-of-school training sessions or courses, conferences, post-graduate study, and school-based professional development.

School-based professional development offers a good way for teachers to reflect on particular aspects of their teaching. This can take many different forms. It may include formal training sessions as well as informal conversations and meetings. Ideally, school-based PLD includes links to classroom practice so that the knowledge gained is applied in day-to-day teaching. The individual teacher and/or a wider group of colleagues then provide feedback on how well new practice is working.

Conferences and one-or-two day courses give teachers opportunities to understand new developments in a specific context, such as in a curriculum area or in working with particular groups of students. Postgraduate study can be an appropriate way for teachers to develop a deeper understanding of educational research and how this may be applied in the classroom.

In recent years the Ministry of Education has initiated several national professional development projects. Many of the schools in this evaluation were involved in one or more of these: *Literacy Professional Development Project* (LPDP), the *Numeracy Project,* the *Assess to Learn* (AtoL) initiative, the *Information and Communication Technologies* (ICT) *clusters* and other initiatives occurring as part of *Extending High Standards Across Schools* (EHSAS). The strong pedagogical base for these projects provides common strands and elements that run across all. For example aspects of formative assessment and teaching practices are evident in the learning outcomes of each.

NEW ZEALAND'S INVESTMENT IN PLD IN SCHOOLS

The New Zealand government invests a considerable amount in learning and development for teachers.

A 2008 report from the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG)[4] calculated that the Ministry of Education invested approximately $200 million per year in the following areas:
- funding professional development providers;
- providing operational funding to schools, some of which schools use for the professional development of teachers;
- funding other types of professional development, for example Schooling Improvement initiatives and scholarships for teachers;
- monitoring professional development providers and evaluating professional development initiatives; and
- collating and providing evidence of effective professional development.

4   Office of the Auditor-General. (2008). *Ministry of Education: Supporting professional development for teachers.* Wellington: Office of the Auditor-General.

Of this $200 million, the Ministry of Education currently spends $108 million per year on professional development initiatives across all schools. This is allocated through various contracts and includes the work of the School Support Services (advisers) and such national initiatives as the Literacy and Numeracy Projects.

In the other categories listed above is the money for professional development provided to schools through their operational funding.

In addition to government funding, many school boards of trustees also contribute their own money to PLD through locally-raised funds. The overall spending on PLD (Ministry money and schools' own funds) is higher than $200 million per annum. In addition to the investment of financial resources by the Ministry and schools, PLD represents a considerable investment by providers, boards, teachers and school leaders.

RESEARCH ON TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In January 2008, the Ministry of Education released its *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)* report. This document sets out in detail the nature of effective professional development for schools. The report indicates that high quality professional learning and development is not subject to a single prescription. The conditions for professional learning and development can vary considerably and are dependent on the school context, including the planning and management of the programmes.

Helen Timperley, lead author for the BES report, has synthesised principles that help schools identify the best practice for planning effective professional learning and development programmes to improve teacher practice and students' learning.[5] The underlying expectation of these principles is that educators will accept professional learning and development as an 'inquiry and knowledge-building cycle' Schools that develop a learning culture seek ongoing improvement in all aspects of their operations. The school's professional learning and development programme enables teachers to consider new ideas and, where relevant, transport these into their classroom practice. Student outcomes are linked to the changes teachers make to their teaching approaches.[6]

Thomas Guskey (2000)[7] provides a comprehensive checklist to help school leaders plan and evaluate their professional learning and development programme. Use of this checklist can enhance teachers' understanding of the direct impact of their programme on teaching and learning.[8]

5   Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development* (p20). Perth: International Academy of Education.

6   See *Appendix 3.*

7   Guskey, T. (2000). *Evaluating professional development* (p253). California: Corwin Press.

8   See *Appendix 4.*

PREVIOUS EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE REPORTS ON TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ERO has written two previous reports on the professional development of teachers: *The In-Service Training of Teachers: The Responsibility of Boards of Trustees* (1995) and *In-Service Training for Teachers in New Zealand Schools* (2000). The 2000 report was based on questionnaire responses from 187 schools and a follow up visit to 21 case-study schools. It included a considerable amount of contextual information about professional development in New Zealand and overseas. In particular, ERO examined how well training was managed in order to inform government policies about in-service training. ERO also reported good practice to assist other schools.

The 2000 report discussed the characteristics of good practice in managing professional learning and development. Principals in these schools:
• identified school needs and sought appropriate training;
• evaluated the effectiveness of their in-service training;
• reported on ways to overcome barriers caused by location or size;
• identified the specific role of the principal as leader; and
• identified the specific role of teachers as professionals.

Areas for further development identified in ERO's 2000 report included:
• the need for teachers to examine their beliefs about teaching and learning;
• the need for principals to know the importance of the links between the professional development content and its relevancy to teachers' needs (ownership);
• finding ways to ensure the transfer of knowledge from the in-service training to the classroom occurred;
• increasing the range of in-service training that schools in isolated areas participated in;
• the evaluation of in-service training for teachers including criteria that could be used to evaluate the extent to which the outcomes have been met;
• knowledge creation where teachers undertake classroom-based research; and
• in-service training to meet the needs of newly appointed principals.

SCHOOLS IN THIS STUDY

ERO evaluated how well schools managed professional learning and development in 317 primary schools in Terms 1 and 2, 2008. The evaluation took place as part of each school's scheduled education review.

The study included 164 full primary, 133 contributing, 20 intermediate schools. Of these schools, 42 were state integrated schools and 92 were classified as rural schools.

EVALUATION APPROACH

ERO gathered and analysed information in response to the following evaluative questions:

- How well is professional learning and development managed for the benefit of teachers and students?
- What is the quality of the school's planning and decision-making for professional learning and development?
- How well does the school's implementation of professional learning and development support ongoing teacher development?
- What changes have occurred for teachers and students as a result of professional learning and development?

In the following section of this report, case vignettes of seven primary schools are interspersed to give the reader examples of how different schools have managed their professional learning and development.

School reviews were conducted with the support of an indicator framework based on the evidence set out in *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. The indicator framework guided reviewers in their evaluation of the management of professional learning and development in each school.[9]

In addition, ERO judgements were also informed by a school questionnaire and individual surveys from some or all of the teachers at each school.[10] The questionnaire collected data on the school's planning and spending on professional learning and development; the nature and broad outcomes of any school-wide professional learning and development initiatives; as well as any constraints or challenges the school faced in accessing high quality professional learning and development.

The teacher survey provided information from staff members on the types of professional learning and development undertaken in the last 18 months; the decisions made to choose their professional learning and development programme; and an outline of teachers' experience of school professional learning and development practices.

Both the school questionnaire and the teacher survey material have been aggregated to give a national perspective. The analysis of this data has been used in this report and is discussed further on.

9   See *Appendix 1.*

10 Review teams used surveys to help gain a picture of professional learning and development across the staff. The number of surveys therefore varied between schools, although a maximum of 25 surveys was set as a guideline.

Findings

OVERVIEW OF THIS EVALUATION

Teachers need a range of knowledge, skills and attributes to meet the diverse learning needs of students today. Ongoing professional learning and development is therefore critical to maintaining and improving teacher quality.

In making judgements about primary schools' management of professional learning and development, ERO considered the following:

• planning and decision-making;
• school culture and practices; and
• the impact of professional learning and development.

Each of these is discussed in more detail in following sections. A separate section on the monitoring and evaluation of PLD is also included, given the significance of ERO's findings in this area.

Based on these three aspects, primary schools in this evaluation can be grouped into three categories. These groups will be used throughout the report to describe differences between schools with high quality management of professional learning and development, and those with areas of management to improve on.

As with the self-review questions in this report, the case vignettes have been written for school leaders to consider in relation to their own management of professional learning and development.

Grouping the schools in this study

Thirty-eight percent of the schools in this evaluation demonstrated the characteristics of high quality PLD management. These were categorised as Group 1 schools. There was no one sort of school in this group. It included each type of primary school (full primary, contributing, intermediate); location (urban and rural); and decile.

> *'Our professional learning is challenging, makes you think – a constant learning journey.'* Teacher: Group 1

Schools in Group 1 had PLD programmes that were well aligned with planned school priorities, used analysed student achievement information; had a school-wide focus on improving outcomes for students; involved teachers in collaborative discourse about the best teaching practices to achieve this; and operated in a reflective and supportive environment for change. In the very best instances, school leaders were able to provide evidence about the effect professional development was having on teaching and on improved student achievement outcomes.

A slightly larger number of schools in Group 2 (40 percent) shared some common aspects in their management of PLD with those outlined in Group 1. There were, however, differences in the effectiveness of their decision-making and in the level of teachers' involvement in and commitment to planned professional development. Some schools in this group had planned development programmes that had the potential to become high quality but were not yet at the stage where they could demonstrate the effect on student outcomes.

PLD was not well managed in the 22 percent of schools that made up Group 3. Schools in this group could improve their systems and processes in many areas. Although most schools had some form of professional development, this was reactive and lacked responsive leadership. PLD programmes were generally based on the availability of courses or initiatives, and served those who showed an interest or those whose turn it was to attend.

There was a general lack of rationale or coordination underpinning decisions about PLD. This manifested itself in the tenuous links made between school priorities in planning, and the content of the programme. In some cases too much had been planned with little thought given to the impact this would have on student outcomes or the effect it would have on teachers and, ultimately, student outcomes.

> *'Too much professional development and no time to get to grips with it results in apathy before the next lot arrives.'* Teacher: Group 3

Were particular types of schools more effective than others?
Although there were marginally more rural, small and low decile schools in Group 3, it is important to note that for each of these aspects (decile, size and location); the differences found in the effectiveness of schools were not individually statistically significant.[11] The results indicate that being small, rural or low decile is not enough of a factor to detract from the quality of the management of professional learning and development. Several schools with these features were also among the Group 1 schools.

Discussing the findings in more depth
The following five headings provide a framework for more in-depth discussion of the findings.

1. Managing professional learning and development.
2. Professional learning and development culture.
3. Monitoring and evaluating professional learning and development.
4. Spending on professional learning and development.
5. Constraints and challenges.

11 A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test for a difference in distributions of the test scores for each decile group and each size group. A Mann-Whitney U test was used to test for a difference in distributions of the test scores between rural and urban schools. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

1   MANAGING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In making a judgement about how well primary schools managed professional learning and development, reviewers considered the following:
- planning and decision-making;
- school culture and practice; and
- the impact of professional learning and development.

What were the characteristics of schools where professional learning and development was well managed?

Professional learning and development refers to all the formal and informal processes used to improve the knowledge and practice of teachers. It includes specifically structured courses and initiatives as well as less formal collaboration and discussion between colleagues.

The extent to which teachers' knowledge and practice improves is, in part, dependent on the how well the school manages its PLD programmes. Boards of trustees, principals, senior managers and teachers each have a role in ensuring the school's programme successfully effects change in teachers' practice and improves outcomes for students.

In the schools with high quality PLD management:
- planning was well aligned with school priorities, and informed by analysed student achievement information and information about teachers' professional needs (through appraisal);
- school-wide learning and development involved all school leaders and teachers in professional discussions of common interest;
- school-based professional learning was targeted to specific curriculum priorities or areas of need identified by school review and/or assessment;
- externally facilitated PLD related to identified school priorities;
- shared leadership gave teachers opportunities to participate in decision making and to lead professional learning and development initiatives at syndicate or school-wide level;
- school culture supported professional learning;
- relevant educational research was used to inform PLD planning and classroom practice;
- there were opportunities for professional growth through individual study; and
- the impact of PLD on the quality of teaching and improved student outcomes was monitored and evaluated.

Characteristics of schools where professional learning and development was not well managed

In comparison with the Group 1 schools, some Group 2 and most Group 3 schools were less likely to:

- have professional PLD programmes that were well aligned to school planning priorities and targets;
- make decisions for PLD based on identified teacher needs or analysed student data;
- make explicit the links between professional learning, improved teacher practice and positive outcomes for students;
- give teachers opportunities to observe others teaching, or to provide teachers with professional feedback to enhance their teaching;
- have school leaders (including the principal) actively involved in PLD;
- involve teachers in PLD decision making; and
- have systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of PLD on the quality of teaching and improved student outcomes.

Many schools in this evaluation were yet to develop fully or establish ways of monitoring and evaluating the impact of their PLD. Although the majority of Group 1 schools could report the impact of professional learning and development on teacher practice and student learning, some Group 2 and most Group 3 schools did not have the systems to tell them how effective their PLD had been.

Leading the learning

An important difference between schools with high quality PLD and other schools, regardless of size or location, was the quality of the principal's leadership and management of the school's professional learning and development programme.

Effective principals:

- had a rationale for what PLD would achieve in their school;
- placed a clear focus on improving student outcomes;
- participated with their staff in PLD programmes;
- were willing to share leadership roles with other staff members;
- took a collaborative approach to PLD decision-making
- modelled reflective practice;
- understood the place and value of educational research; and
- worked effectively with their board to resource PLD.

Principals with high quality programmes had the ability to communicate these characteristics to their teachers. They shared their vision and rationale for professional learning and development with teachers and other staff involved in the teaching process. These principals sought the views of trustees and worked with the board to resource PLD prior to making decisions. Their collaborative approach encouraged and involved the school community. They worked with other school leaders and teachers to ensure that facilitation was well directed and that leadership was not seen as a 'top down' process.

> *'We have a great principal – she's open minded, accessible, willing to listen, and she leads us through her involvement with professional development.'* Teacher: Group 1

Effective principals actively involved themselves in the learning process. They were not always seen as leading the PLD but they were present and active as learners. Consequently, their professional discussions with staff were based on a shared understanding about new knowledge relevant to their school.

They encouraged an open and trusting environment where sharing achievement data and critiquing classroom practices was done in ways that encouraged professional discussion and supported innovation. Teachers talked about themselves as belonging to a community of learners where their principals had been successful in developing such a culture.

Sharing the leadership

High quality leaders offered teachers opportunities to lead or facilitate professional learning and development. In some cases, teachers were selected because they had a strong passion for a specific area or sound teaching practice in it. This was not necessarily in an academic/curriculum area but could be related to social or behavioural dimensions.

These teacher-leaders (lead teachers) were willing to be observed by other teachers and openly discussed their classroom programme and practice. They also observed others' teaching and gave them encouragement and well-constructed feedback. Most lead teachers were actively involved in study, and shared their new knowledge at professional forums such as staff, team or syndicate meetings.

Lead teachers had often learned or developed the special skills that made them suitable mentors or coaches for their colleagues. Teachers who observed or were observed by skilled lead teachers reported that they found the professional discussions beneficial and informative. It often helped that the lead teacher was of similar age or experience to the teacher or teachers they were working with. These professional interactions made the sustainability of new practices more likely because teachers were not left to implement newly learnt strategies in isolation.

'Having a critical friend to discuss professional learning successes, and concerns with really helps.' Teacher: Group 1

Sharing and leading practice proved more difficult for small (five or fewer teachers), rural schools located some distance from neighbouring schools. In small schools, each teacher taught at a different (most often multiple) level, and had few opportunities to observe or discuss professional matters with other teachers working at a similar level. Learning from each other was not as easy because of the difference in class levels and teacher or student needs. However, some schools were either part of local cluster groups established for national initiatives, or had established their own clusters. Teachers in these schools found cluster discussions a worthwhile vehicle for sharing and discussing practice.

School A: Group 1
Although over 50 percent of the students at this school are from New Zealand European/Pākehā backgrounds there is an increasingly diverse student population with a significant percentage requiring English language support. This contributing school has a large roll and is situated in a high decile urban area.

The majority of students achieve well in literacy and mathematics. Clearly defined criteria for achievement help students to know how well they are progressing and guide them in identifying what they need to do to improve their learning and achievement.

Leading from the front and collaborating for learning
The principal has an up-to-date knowledge of educational research and this has been instrumental in leading the development of the school's professional learning focus on literacy, numeracy and assessment. Together with her school leaders, she has also influenced the particular professional development practices the school has developed over several years.

These practices have a focus on staff collaboration and small group partnerships. The groups provide forums for teachers to share ideas, resources, professional readings and classroom materials. Teachers observe the teaching practices of colleagues who have particular expertise in an area and they invite observation of their own teaching.

'School leaders participate in the learning, and act as guides and mentors to others. They reflect our school's culture where everyone is regarded as a learner.'
Teacher: School A

Staff have a high level of trust in their colleagues and welcome the support they receive from the school's leadership team to reflect on and modify their teaching practice as a result of collaborative activities. School leaders have noticed an increase in teachers taking responsibility for their development over time and an increase in the quality of the informal professional discussions between staff.

'We use research information, coaching and collegial support to help us with our professional learning and development.' Teacher: School A

Using evidence to inform professional learning

A strong focus on the analysis and use of student assessment information underpins the use by all teachers of evidence to inform their teaching and learning. Teachers use what they know about how well students are progressing to talk about their teaching and how they might improve their practices.

'I learnt to use data analysis to target needs in the classroom from the planning through to the next steps and beyond.' Teacher: School A

The use of formative assessment strategies at classroom level has led to students being more aware of the purposes of their learning. Teachers use these strategies to make it clear to students what they need to do and achieve to be successful in their work. The consistent use of these strategies has helped students develop a clearer idea of what skills and knowledge they need to become better readers and writers. Teachers have recorded improved achievement for particular student groups as a result of using these formative strategies.

The school uses several different tools to assess and analyse student learning. Information gained from these assessments is directly related to the strategies teachers are developing through their collaboration with other staff. For example, analysis of an asTTle test component showed that some students were simply not enjoying their reading. As a result of this teachers introduced a range of strategies, including book clubs, and fathers and male teachers reading with boys, to motivate students to read for recreational purposes. Subsequent asTTle reading results have shown improved attitudes to reading.

In addition to analysed student information, the school also makes good use of teacher and student surveys to guide their professional decision-making. These surveys complement the information gathered by the school's assessment tools and help develop the inclusive and critical professional culture evident at the school.

'Our professional learning initiatives have helped to improve my abilities to analyse data and find focus areas for future teaching. The observations, coaching and the feedback I received have also helped my teaching.' Teacher: School A

Where to next?
Teacher induction is an on-going challenge for the school. As teachers develop their knowledge of literacy, numeracy and assessment it becomes potentially more difficult for new staff to come into the school and sustain the professional development gains across the school.

2   PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT CULTURE

ERO considered the following in examining the professional learning and development culture of schools:
• staff professional interactions and relationships;
• the nature and mix of school-wide professional learning and development;
• individual and small group professional learning and development; and
• the sustainability of professional learning and development.

Staff professional interactions and relationships

Schools that managed their professional learning and development well had a strong learning culture. Trust was implicit in the development of such a culture. Teachers wanted to be able to give and get honest feedback about their teaching in an environment where they were not being compared with others, but where self-improvement was encouraged. Developing a culture of honesty and openness requires strong and professional relationships. The most successful school leaders found that this took time, but the efforts were worth it.

In the most professional of learning cultures teachers were able to talk openly about each other's classroom data. This was not an activity that came naturally to some teachers particularly where data aggregation and analysis had previously been the domain of school leaders. Devolving this responsibility to groups of teachers gave them ownership. In addition teachers found that student achievement data and information was critical in shaping the ways they thought about their teaching. Regular discussions related to their classroom practice and, linked to educational research, supported changes to their practice.

The nature and mix of school-wide professional learning and development

Schools with high quality PLD management had a clear focus on involving the whole school. Their focus was at times internal and sometimes external. Whichever provision they chose, the rationale always centred on what was important for their school in terms of targeted student and teacher outcomes.

PLD planning had a clear focus on priorities identified by the school. There were strong links between the quality of the school's self-review processes and the quality of their planning for PLD. Where the school had robust self-review systems these were based on good assessment processes and an active culture of self reflection.

Schools that had used their internal review processes to establish school-wide and targeted priorities had planned carefully to meet these. Their planning for PLD involved a mix of school-based internally and externally facilitated programmes, opportunities for individuals and groups to participate in conferences and seminars and opportunities for teachers to develop their individual knowledge and skills.

Schools' involvement in nationally-based professional development initiatives such as the *Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP)*, the *Numeracy Project, Assess to Learn* (AtoL) and *ICT clusters,* offered teacher-focused and well-researched learning and development. The strong pedagogical base for each of these projects had common strands and elements especially associated with aspects of formative assessment and teaching practices. When school leaders and lead teachers made these connections clear, and worked with their teachers to understand and implement the associated pedagogies, the initiatives had a strong impact on the professional culture of the school.

Principals and teachers involved in these initiatives told ERO that the PLD opportunities resulting from their participation in these initiatives had a positive impact on how they thought about their teaching and, where they had changed their practice, how these changes had helped them improve students' achievement. The close alignment of each initiative with classroom practice and student learning engaged teachers' interest and heightened their willingness to try new ideas.

The downside, as with any PLD programme, is that some schools took on too many initiatives at once and did not plan time to embed the new learning gained from the initiatives. There were instances where schools had participated in end-on-end initiatives or where they were doubling up on initiatives in order not to miss out on the opportunity to participate. This was frustrating for teachers who did not get the full benefit of the development initiative.

> *'I did not seem to have the time and support to help me put things into classroom practice before there were new things to learn.'* Teacher: Group 2

Where the cascade model employed in some of the national initiatives did not work as intended, not all classroom teachers received the full benefits of the planned professional learning. For example, the process as it works in the LPDP operates on a model of regional team leaders who each lead a cluster of facilitators. Each facilitator works with school-based literacy leaders, principals, and teachers of the participating schools; supporting them to take an inquiry and evidence-based approach to increasing the effectiveness of the literacy practices in their school. The model is a sound one but problems can occur.

The effectiveness of the process depends on the skills and continuity of position, especially in the key roles of facilitator or literacy leader. If these personnel are not sufficiently skilled to impart their knowledge or they leave the school, the impact and benefits of the professional learning may not reach the intended recipients – the classroom teachers. Both principals and teachers talked of instances where this had occurred.

Individual and small group professional learning and development

In each of the groups, but more often in Group 1 schools, many of the senior leaders and teachers were involved in some form of professional study. Teachers talked about the reciprocal benefits of sharing the knowledge gained from their studies with their colleagues. This provided opportunities to articulate what had been learnt and how this might have relevance to classroom practice and student learning. Similarly, those attending conferences talked about their learning with other staff members. Teachers learnt from one another through observing, being observed and sharing professional feedback.

In some schools teachers were involved in action research to gather specific knowledge about classroom practices in a targeted area such as reading in the junior school. In one instance the principal and senior staff developed a mentoring system to support teachers in transferring the knowledge gained from their research to their classroom practice.

Well-structured staff meetings were more than forums to discuss administrative matters. They were planned so that professional discussion was an agenda item and, often, this included a time for sharing research information and effective classroom practice. There were innovative examples where staff broke into smaller 'learning circles' and then fed back into the larger group. Where this occurred, staff had time to prepare for the meeting by reading background papers or preparing discussion questions.

Parents as learners

Parents can be a very important part of a school's learning culture. The more involved parents are in professional discussions, the more likely they are to work in collaboration with teachers to improve outcomes for their children.[12]

During this evaluation there were examples of lead teachers conducting educational evenings to familiarise parents with new or revised curriculum programmes and engaging in collaborative discussion about effective teaching strategies to promote learning. Discussions on the introduction of the new curriculum, literacy practices and numeracy activities were an ideal forum to share ideas in several schools in this evaluation.

Sustaining professional learning and development

The extent to which any PLD becomes part of the school's day-to-day teaching culture and is sustained beyond its introduction depends to a large degree on the underpinning rationale, the degree of commitment and involvement by teachers and whether, through its monitoring and evaluation practices, the school can show that the PLD has improved student outcomes.

Schools that have the systems and processes in place to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their investment in professional development and learning have a distinct advantage over schools where these are limited or non-existent.

Without strong forward planning based on good quality review and assessment information, there is little on which to base a rationale for resourcing PLD programmes. Similarly, unless teachers can see a clear reason for participating in professional learning of whatever form they are less likely to be committed to the introduction of new or changed teaching practices. Initial enthusiasm is likely to fade if teachers believe their previous practice was just as effective. Teachers' commitment is bound up in being confident about change, being supported to change and seeing results. For this to be effective they need ongoing evaluative information about impact.

School B: Group 1

This school is in a rural valley about 40 minutes from the nearest provincial town. It is a small, full primary, low decile school.

The school's analysed achievement information shows the majority of students are achieving well when compared to norm referenced data in reading, writing and mathematics.

Teachers have participated in school-wide professional development in numeracy, literacy, information communication and technologies (ICT), physical education and te reo Māori.

12 See *Partners in learning: Schools' engagement with parents, whānau and communities,* May 2008. www.ero.govt.nz

Distance is not a challenge

The principal has used a range of strategies to ensure that teachers have effective professional learning and development opportunities despite the school's relative distance from a provincial centre.

The school is part of an ICT cluster with several other schools in the district. This cluster has provided an additional forum for staff to discuss teaching and learning strategies. Most of the teachers work in similar rural environments and have common professional matters to discuss. Apart from contributing to high level ICT integration throughout the school, the cluster development has provided teachers with opportunities to compare and discuss the achievement of students in their area and their teaching strategies.

Learning from student achievement data

The principal and his teachers have a strong focus on student achievement. Good quality planning, linked to sound evidence about student achievement, and a sense of ownership and professionalism amongst the staff has given them the chance to challenge each other about the need to develop new or different ways of teaching to meet students' needs.

The principal and his staff are convinced of the importance of looking at student achievement data to identify learning gaps and of using this information as a main source for making changes to their teaching. Their strategic plan reflects a change in direction where the focus is on student achievement.

This focus has underpinned the collaboration found between staff and also promoted the notion of sustaining their classroom practice by consciously returning to student data to see if they are making a difference.

> *'We are aware as professionals of the need for targeted professional learning and development. A professional job means being prepared for change, to meet students' needs.'* Teacher: School B

Teachers have benefited from working with external facilitators. In numeracy, facilitators have emphasised the importance of staff sharing their approach to teaching and they have modelled good teaching in the classrooms. Through this work, the level of consistency in the use of teaching strategies across the school has increased. Moreover, data in numeracy indicates that a majority of the school's students are achieving scores consistent with or above their expected numeracy level.

Exploring ways to provide a mix of professional learning
In addition to school-based data interrogation and facilitated training, the principal has a key role in finding ways to provide staff with a mix of professional learning and development. Often this relies on how effectively funding can be used.

'The principal has made good use of external funding to support the school's professional learning and development programme. He obtained grants through several different funding sources, for various school professional learning and development initiatives.' Board chairperson: School B

The principal, through the board has sent staff to particular conferences and presentations that complements the school's strategic direction for professional learning and development. The key in this regard is the way in which external professional learning enhances teacher practice and ultimately students' learning and achievement.

Where to next?
Small schools are often vulnerable in terms of retaining staff and sustaining initiatives in teaching and learning. The principal and board acknowledge this challenge but believe that the maintenance of a culture that has a clear focus on professional learning to benefit student achievement is the key.

3   MONITORING AND EVALUATING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Establishing systems to find out about effectiveness

ERO found that the majority of Group 1 schools and some Group 2 schools gathered information about the impact of changes particularly related to student achievement, teaching practice and school systems. In these schools, principals, senior managers and teachers identified changes to:

• classroom practice, including teaching approaches, planning and assessment procedures;
• teachers' knowledge and, by implication, growth in confidence;
• students' progress and achievement;
• students' attitude, as a result of their greater involvement in their learning, progress and achievement; and
• the school's systems and practices.

Thomas Guskey (2000) provides a useful approach for evaluating a school's professional learning and development. Guskey sets out a basic checklist for principals and senior managers to use when planning and evaluating their professional learning and development programme.[13]

13 See *Appendix 3.*

What were the positive impacts of PLD?

Teachers who felt included in decision-making were more committed to making changes and improvements in their teaching practice. Where principals and other school leaders reported regularly on the impact of programmes on teacher practice and student outcomes, the board was able to make more informed decisions about where to place its resources for PLD.

Teachers' involvement with other schools, either as part of a formalised cluster or informal learning group, was seen as valuable. They appreciated opportunities to have professional discussions, share ideas, observe others' teaching at a similar class level and give and receive professional feedback. This interaction contributed to teachers' thinking and assumptions, and to changes they made to their teaching practice.

Overall, principals reported that literacy and numeracy professional learning and development initiatives had the greatest impact on student outcomes and teachers' practice. Students were more engaged and had a greater understanding of their progress as a result of their involvement in their learning.

As a result of the AtoL project, teachers were more aware of the link between assessment procedures that helped identify students' learning needs and the planning of specific lessons to meet those needs. Students were better able to assess their own learning and, together with their teacher, decide their next learning steps.

Discussions about learning between teachers and students enhanced student-teacher relationships and student attitudes to both teaching and learning. The involvement of students in their learning also had significant impact on their overall engagement in learning.

> *'We like being more responsible for our own learning and we like the way we can see how well we are achieving, and what we need to do or learn next.'* Students discussing their work in a rural primary school.

Each of the primary schools in this study reported to ERO on the professional learning and development they had undertaken since January 2007. Schools indicated which initiatives had had the most significant impact for them and what had improved for them and their students.

These features included giving teachers:
• higher levels of confidence and enthusiasm for teaching;
• a deeper knowledge of the relevance of research to their teaching and students' learning; and
• an understanding that students' involvement in their learning led to better engagement.

Some schools cited professional learning and development initiatives as having the greatest impact when they were linked to the context of their schools. For example, where there was a high number of Māori students, schools identified professional learning and development in engagement strategies, te reo me ōna tikanga Māori, and/or a noho marae as being particularly helpful in understanding their students. Teachers in these schools noted a change in teacher and student relationships as a result of the confidence and understanding they gained from this professional learning and development.

Other professional learning and development identified by some schools as having a positive impact included those that met the needs of specific groups of students in their school such as:
• students with special needs, including the gifted and talented;
• ESOL students;
• Pacific students;
• students with behavioural concerns; and
• boys.

School C: Group 1
This is a large, high decile, urban, contributing school with a Level 2 Māori bilingual unit. Most students are achieving well in literacy and numeracy when school data is compared with norm referenced expectations.

School leaders have used their professional learning and development programme to increase proficiency in teaching literacy and numeracy. They have also had art and physical activity and wellbeing focuses. Teachers acknowledge that they have a more deliberate approach to their teaching and that this is specifically related to students' abilities and learning needs. They are more consistent in their teaching practice as a result of their professional learning.

Engaging together
The principal, senior leaders and teachers wanted to create 'a team of highly effective educators whose primary focus was developing lifelong, successful learners'. Their vision encompassed a whole-school focus on learning together and engaging in professional discussions based on new knowledge and understandings about teaching and learning. They have been very successful in achieving this vision.

Bringing people together in this endeavour required high levels of trust between teachers and management. This helped to create a camaraderie that encouraged, in the words of staff, a 'cutting edge' approach to new learning.

'We don't have the flashest buildings but this is made up for by its people and the way they learn together.' Teacher: School C

Of significance is the way that senior managers' share analysed student achievement data with teachers. Teachers use the information to make decisions about teaching approaches that will have a positive impact on students' learning. This information also guides some decisions about future professional learning and development requirements.

Critical partnerships; constructive feedback
Senior managers regularly visit classes and give teachers constructive feedback on specific aspects of teaching. Teachers also have opportunities to observe high quality practitioners in action in their classrooms and to discuss teaching strategies with these colleagues. The benefits of this approach to professional learning accrue during the discussion as teachers work out ways to include effective practice in their own teaching.

Teachers comment that the supportive environment in which this learning takes place is critical to changing practice. There are cautions in how this is achieved. For the most part, these involve knowing teachers' capacity for change and managing this in a way that enables all staff to feel that the practices that they seek to change will contribute to improved student achievement.

'Having a critical friend to discuss professional learning, successes, strengths and concerns with, really helps.' Teacher: School C

Where to next?
Senior leaders have identified the need to align teachers' appraisal with the professional learning and development programme. The closer alignment of the appraisal process to the professional learning and development programme could highlight how successfully teachers have made the links between changing practice and student learning, engagement and achievement.

'The learning is challenging, makes you think – a constant learning journey.'
Teacher: School C

The role of appraisal

Teacher appraisals can provide an important source for PLD planning. Teachers' self appraisals together with observed practice can help school leaders target areas where teachers may need PLD support. However, of a sample group of 100 schools, just under a half of the principals considered teacher appraisals as a source of information when planning the school's professional learning and development.

The relatively minor contribution of the appraisal information in schools' decisions about professional learning and development is consistent with ERO's previous national report: *In Service Training for Teachers in New Zealand Schools.*[14]

Some schools used a different approach to provide professional feedback. The mentoring programme, critical friend interactions, informal and formal observations, feedback and professional discussions, were seen by principals and teachers as forms of professional and teacher development. They also complemented the teacher appraisal processes because of their strong links to classroom practice.

4   SPENDING ON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Principals gave ERO a breakdown of their spending on professional learning and development. They were also asked to note the amount spent on courses or facilitators (providers), travel, accommodation and relievers.

The reported levels of spending provided by the primary schools in this evaluation can be treated as broadly accurate. Although the relatively large sample of primary schools provides a good basis for analysis, evidence from earlier ERO work suggests that it is difficult to accurately determine spending for areas like professional development.

Differences in spending between Groups 1, 2 and 3 schools

Data for Group 1, 2 and 3 schools for the 2007 and 2008 school years is summarised in the following table:[15]

Table 1: Primary school spending per full-time equivalent teacher on professional learning and development

	2007 (actual spend per FTE)	2008 (budgeted spend per FTE)
Group 1	$1,100	$1,180
Group 2	$1,160	$1,290
Group 3	$1,230	$1,330

Although schools in Group 3 spent slightly more per teacher on PLD the differences are not significant. Low decile primary schools ($1240) spent more per teacher on professional learning and development in 2007 than did high decile ($1120) and medium decile schools ($1090). These differences were also reflected in the amounts these schools had budgeted for the 2008 school year. Again these differences are not significant.

14 Education Review Office. (2000). *In-service training for teachers in New Zealand schools.* Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

15 These numbers are rounded to the nearest $10. Teacher numbers are based on the roll generated full-time equivalent staffing.

Small schools ($1260) also spent more in 2007 than medium ($1180) and large schools ($1110), a pattern maintained in their budgeted amounts for 2008. In part, the difference in spending may reflect the fact that many of these schools are rural, and face additional costs in terms of travel and accommodation. Small schools also face additional expenses due to economies of scale, given that some aspects of professional development spending are somewhat fixed, for example, the cost of an external facilitator.

School D: Group 1
This school is a large, low decile, intermediate school in a provincial centre. The majority of its students are Māori.

The school is organised into five 'learning centres' to accommodate each student's learning needs and interests. One of these centres has a focus on students who have specific learning needs and has a teacher-student ratio of approximately 1:12. Another centre has a focus on students of high ability. The other three centres have curriculum focuses on physical education and health, mathematics and science, or the arts. Students have a say in which setting best meets their needs. Each centre has an ongoing focus on literacy and numeracy. Student achievement information shows that by the time they leave the school, the majority of students are achieving at a level appropriate for Year 8 students in New Zealand.

Centring professional development in the school
In keeping with the students' centre-based initiative, teachers also have a professional development centre. It was instituted at the end of 2006 when the principal recognised that the school's learning centre model made it difficult for external providers to sufficiently tailor their programmes to meet teachers' professional development needs. School leaders also believed that quality professional learning needed to be followed by classroom support and regular short-term sessions relevant to teachers' needs.

Attendance is mandatory for teachers in four out of eight of their fortnightly blocks of non-contact time. The sessions involve small groups teachers (three or four) working with the facilitator. The size of the groups enables everyone to have the opportunity to contribute, and there is more likelihood of individual teachers having their needs met.

School and individual professional development needs are identified and addressed through the performance management system, teacher reflection and self-review. Teachers have an agreed set of beliefs and expectations about what constitutes high quality teaching and learning. These shared beliefs have helped develop the school's professional learning culture by encouraging teachers to continue improving the effectiveness of their teaching.

'The professional learning and development has made my understanding of curriculum and my delivery to students much better.' Teacher: School D

Provisionally registered teachers receive additional support from the professional development centre. These staff have two full days of professional development time every five weeks to support their registration and to also help them gain the knowledge and skills that other staff have already gained through the professional development programme.

The major focuses for professional development have been on numeracy and literacy, and in more recent times, assessment. The teachers at School D have gained confidence in their work in these areas and there have also been improvements in the achievement of students. Since 2003 achievement levels have steadily increased, with particular gains being made during 2007 and 2008. These gains have meant that on average, Year 8 Māori and Pākehā students leave with literacy and numeracy levels slightly above the national average.

Monitoring and evaluating professional learning and development
Professional development is well organised and supported by high quality school review. Student achievement analyses inform decisions about teaching and learning, and reviews about the effectiveness of classroom practice contribute to decisions about how well professional development is serving the needs of teachers. There is a clearly documented review of professional learning and development.

The performance management system operates as a collaborative process between the school's staff and management. Teachers trust the school's management to provide high quality feedback on their teaching while also offering high quality support through the professional development centre.

Overall, the use of assessment data, observations and teacher feedback mean that school management has good knowledge of the impact of professional development on school practice. The thorough documentation of this provides clear direction for the ongoing refinements and continual improvements to school's professional development programme.

> *'We have time and support to help translate what we learn into classroom practice.'* Teacher: School D
>
> **Where to next?**
> The school's approach to professional development means that there are fewer connections with external providers and teachers at other schools. Potentially, there is scope for the school to make links with other schools and, where possible, external professional development providers, to help them reflect and build on the success of their current approach.
>
> The principal is investigating how best to include technology teachers in the professional development structures of the centre. Currently, professional development sessions for teaching staff take place when their students have technology. This is a systemic problem that needs to take account of all staff.

5   CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

Being a small, isolated rural school

An analysis of the distribution of school decile, size and location in the above groups identified issues that affected the management of professional learning and development across all types of primary schools. In addition, ERO found there were particular issues for small rural schools located in isolated areas.

Some of the schools in Group 1 located in isolated areas had planned strategically to meet their needs, but similar schools in Group 2 and Group 3 perceived the remoteness of their school as a constraint.

Although being rural was not in itself an issue, being rural and small presented challenges for a significant number of these schools (57 percent). Attendance by a teacher at any professional development and learning initiative cost money and time. Travel, overnight accommodation and the employment of a relieving teacher often had a negative impact on the school's limited financial resources. Principals in these schools saw internal professional learning and development with an external facilitator as a way to overcome this, but such PLD could be constrained by the availability of an external facilitator.

Availability of relieving teachers

Thirty-seven percent of rural principals in this evaluation reported, as an ongoing concern, the availability of relievers from a limited pool of teachers experienced in multi level teaching. This concern was not so apparent in locations where relievers were sought to teach one or, at most, two class levels.

ERO found that teachers in small rural schools were isolated from other teachers teaching at similar levels. There were few opportunities for professional sharing, dialogue and reflection, and teachers seldom observed others teaching at a similar level.

Principals in most other schools in this evaluation also identified the availability of relievers as a challenge, particularly if the whole school was involved in professional learning and development and there was insufficient coverage. To counter this, most principals, senior managers and lead teachers tended to organise their school-wide programmes during teachers' non-contact time.

School E: Group 2
This school is a full primary school in a rural area. The majority of its students are Māori. It has had five ERO reviews since 2003. These reviews have been prompted because of especially difficult issues affecting the school's governance and management.

A newly appointed principal was in place at the time of the school's most recent ERO report. The report noted good analysis and use of assessment information, improvements to student achievement, a developing learning culture and a shared focus on continuing these improvements.

How important is leadership for learning?
Turning a troubled school into a successful school is heavily reliant on good leadership. The appointment of a new principal has provided this school with a sound platform for strengthening teachers' professional learning and development and for supporting them to improve student learning and achievement. The principal is working with staff to develop their analysis skills so they can use assessment information to identify where they need to place their teaching and professional development priorities.

In recent years teachers have had intensive professional development in writing, reading, numeracy, curriculum management and assessment but, as a school, they had little idea about what impact this had had on improving student learning and achievement.

The principal has now begun a process of identifying, through assessment and data analysis, what aspects of the work done in numeracy development need further strengthening and what has not worked as intended. This sort of involved leadership for learning is giving teachers a clear focus for the future.

Notwithstanding the amount of professional development undertaken by teachers, there is a positive culture of staff learning. Teachers are keen to share their practice and to find out what works for their students. This adds to the platform set by the principal. The commitment by teachers has resulted in improved school-wide teaching practice, knowledge and planning. This in turn has had a positive effect on student engagement and emerging ownership of their learning.

'Our principal has made a huge difference through her strong leadership'
Teacher: School E

Parents need to know and want to help
Parents want their children to do well and are interested in what is going on at the school. The principal recognises that the most productive partnerships occur when teachers and parents work together to support children's learning.

Parents noticed the changes almost immediately. In particular, they noticed changes in their children's self esteem as a result of teachers celebrating student successes rather than reflecting on their failures. The increased willingness of teachers to listen to and work with parents made them confident that their views would be listened to.

This relationship was attributable not only to the principal's insistence that this be the case but also because of the work done by teachers as part of their own professional learning about the impacts of positive teaching strategies on students' learning and achievement.

'We like to see our board investing in quality teachers' Parent: School E

'The teacher and I have met and set goals to monitor my child's progress together. This is refreshing.' Parent: School E

Where to next – building on the foundation
This school now needs to involve its senior managers in taking a more coordinated approach to managing and monitoring all professional learning and development programmes.

With a large number of Māori students underachieving in numeracy, it is critical that school leaders now identify those aspects of the numeracy professional learning and development that will help rectify this.

Staffing

Most principals in Groups 1, 2 and 3 reported challenges with staffing. Constant changes to staffing had implications for the continuity of teacher learning throughout the school. Often the significant experience and knowledge gained by individual teachers through their involvement in their school's professional learning and development programme was lost when the teachers left the school. Senior managers had to provide refresher or induction programmes for new staff to ensure the 'knowledge gap' was eliminated as soon as possible.

Changes to staffing made it difficult to embed new practice. Where schools did not have systems in place to counter the inevitability of staff changes, the loss of knowledge and experience was significant and the sustainability of new practice was an ongoing challenge.

Quality of the facilitator/provider

External facilitation was sourced from a variety of providers including the nearest university's advisory pool, Ministry of Education facilitators and private facilitators. Principals reported that high quality facilitators knew their content well, had a good research background and planned activities that were relevant to classroom practice and student learning. The most effective facilitators modelled classroom practice, provided ongoing instruction and guidance, observed teachers in their classrooms and gave constructive and supportive feedback.

Some facilitators did not always address the concerns or interests of teachers, particularly those in small, isolated rural schools involved in multi-level teaching. Additionally some teachers did not always have access to support and guidance from facilitators as an ongoing component of the school's professional learning and development courses.

Teacher commitment

Teachers' commitment to PLD is critical in the success of programmes. ERO found that where school leaders lacked a collaborative approach that involved teachers in sharing the decision-making there was less likelihood of teachers involving themselves fully in the PLD programme or initiative.

School leaders need to be mindful of how teachers learn and the amount of PLD they can reasonably be expected take on if there are to be sustainable changes to their practice. Some principals chose to take a 'less is more' approach. This gave teachers time to make connections with other things they have learned, try new ideas and embed these in their day-to-day teaching. With fewer professional development initiatives, done in more depth, these principals acknowledged a greater investment of teachers' time, interest and commitment.

School F: Group 3

This is a rural, full primary school with a mid-sized roll. While many of the students are of New Zealand European/Pākehā background there are also a significant number of Māori students.

The most recent ERO report noted concerns about the school-wide quality of teaching and the negative impact some relationship management issues were having on the quality of service delivery. In addition, the board had experienced a high level of turnover and new trustees had not yet had the time to effectively understand their roles.

Lack of commitment to professional learning

The school does not have an effective professional learning and development programme. While there is a considerable amount budgeted for this purpose, there is little evidence that the courses teachers undertake, or the school's own professional development processes, result in improved teaching practice and student outcomes.

Professional development has focused on Māori language, spelling, basic facts and relationships. For various reasons teachers' learning from these programmes is not evident in their day-to-day practice.

Many of the school's teachers have not felt committed to the professional development programme. They were not involved in the planning, do not appear to understand the basic principles underpinning the programmes and do not feel the programme meets their needs. For this reason many of the teachers have not implemented new strategies in their classroom teaching.

Lack of alignment to school planning and processes

The programme lacks a close link to teachers' individual and collective needs. The performance management system is not structured to identify areas where individuals or groups of teachers would benefit from professional support. In addition, teachers receive limited feedback and support for the implementation of new approaches, further eroding their sense of ownership.

The various courses attended by the staff lack alignment to the school planning goals and have limited impact on the overall quality of teaching at the school. Similarly the principal's attendance at overseas conferences has tenuous links to either personal development needs or school goals.

'Getting to grips' with professional learning

Many teachers noted that there had been too much professional development for them to 'take on board' and that they could see no pattern in what was being done. These teachers had little sense about where the topics for professional development had come from. They were not involved in any analysis of student data that would lead them to believe that professional development was an appropriate way of remedying a perceived deficit in their teaching or in the school's programme. In fact what data there was showed that student achievement in spelling had actually regressed during the professional development process.

Where to next?

One of the main challenges for this school is to make time for teachers to embed new learning as part of their teaching practice. Teachers need time to discuss possible changes in their practice, implement these changes and discuss the impact on students. To do this they need to be able to talk together about how well students' are achieving.

The 'top-down' approach employed by the principal inhibits the involvement of teachers in this process. Teachers need to understand why they are being asked to consider changes to their practice and how development initiatives will provide opportunities for them to reflect on and share teaching strategies for the good of their students.

They also need ongoing support and guidance to ensure they embed the new learning into their day-to-day teaching practice. Collaboration, collegiality and feedback are all aspects that would enhance teacher commitment, and impact more positively on outcomes for both teachers and students.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF MĀORI AND PACIFIC STUDENTS

During all education reviews of schools, ERO reported on the progress and achievement of Māori and Pacific students because of concerns about the low achievement of these groups when compared to other students nationally.

ERO found that in most schools, there was limited mention of professional learning and development specific to supporting Māori or Pacific students in their learning. A 'one size fits all' approach meant that teachers did not have opportunities to consider the factors that helped Māori and Pacific students to learn.

Despite the valuable Te Mana Kōrero professional development resource[16] developed by the Ministry of Education to help teachers focus on high quality teaching practices to engage Māori students in learning, ERO found limited mention of its use in primary schools.

16 Te Mana Kōrero DVD professional development package. See: http://www.tki.org.nz/r/maori_mainstream/temana_e.php

School G: Group 3

This is a small contributing school in a provincial town. It is situated in a mid-decile area.

School leaders are beginning to build the professional learning and development culture. The board recently appointed a principal who has begun work on this process with trustees and teachers.

Aspects of good teaching are evident in most classes and as teachers are supported to plan, teach and assess to meet to the range of abilities and needs in their classes the overall quality of teaching will improve.

School leaders are in the early stages of developing the quality of school-wide assessment information. Progressive Achievement Test results suggest that most students in Years 3 to 8 achieve below expected levels for their age in mathematics. As yet there is little aggregated or analysed school-wide data in reading, writing or numeracy.

Making better decisions about professional learning and development

Staff frequently discuss new strategies and approaches to teaching and learning in an informal and collegial manner. Despite this, the school has yet to build a suitable evidence base for planning its professional learning and development.

Most decisions about professional development are based on teachers' interests. As yet there is no clear link between school planning, target setting and student achievement information as the basis for making professional development decisions. In addition there is little link between teacher appraisal and identifying professional learning priorities for teachers. Better coordination in these aspects would enhance the schools systems when deciding its priorities for development.

School leaders together with trustees will have to invest time building the systems and processes that provide evidence for planning and evaluating professional development. This includes developing their skills to analyse student achievement information and enhancing their systems for identifying the development priorities for teachers.

Conclusion

The extent to which teachers' knowledge and practice improves depends to a large extent on how well the school manages its PLD programmes. Boards of trustees, principals, senior managers and teachers each have a role in ensuring that the school's PLD programmes focus on improving teaching practice and improving outcomes for students.

In this evaluation ERO found that, where PLD was well managed, schools:
• had aligned their PLD programmes with school priorities informed by analysed student achievement information, and information about teachers' professional needs;
• had developed a school culture in which professional learning was encouraged and resourced;
• had shared the leadership of PLD so that staff at all levels had opportunities to participate in decision making and to lead initiatives at school-wide or syndicate level;
• had highly involved and interested principals and other school leaders;
• had a good mix of school-led and facilitated professional learning targeted at identified school priorities;
• used relevant educational research to inform their planning and classroom practice;
• used observation and feedback effectively to support changes to teacher practice;
• encouraged teachers' personal growth through individual study or school-based research; and
• had the self review systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of their PLD expenditure on improving the quality of teaching and student outcomes.

One of the most important determinants of schools' effectiveness in managing their PLD was the extent to which school leaders knew their investment was having the desired effect on changing teacher practice or improving student achievement.

Schools that had well-developed monitoring and self-review systems were able to point to positive changes in:
• teaching practice and teachers' knowledge;
• students' progress and achievement; and
• students' attitudes, as a result of their greater involvement in their learning, and achievement.

Involved and committed leadership from principals and other school leaders was an important component of effective PLD management. Teachers were encouraged by a principal who worked alongside them and shared in their professional learning. In turn the principal and other school leaders were better informed when planning school priorities and PLD initiatives.

Teachers who felt included in decision-making were more committed to making changes and improvements in their teaching practice. Where principals and other school leaders reported regularly on the impact of programmes on teacher practice and student outcomes, the board was able to make more informed decisions about where to place its resources for PLD.

PLD that gave teachers opportunities to have professional discussions, share ideas, observe others' teaching at a similar class level and give and receive professional feedback was more likely to have a positive impact on changing teaching practice.

National initiatives such as the AtoL, literacy and numeracy projects, enabled teachers to become more aware of the links between assessment procedures, identifying students' learning needs and planning specifically to meet these needs. However, taking on too many initiatives at once was a downside for some schools because they had not planned how they would embed the new learning gained from the initiatives.

Being small and rural provided challenges for over half of the schools in this category. Costs associated with attendance at a professional development and learning initiative included travel, overnight accommodation and the employment of a relieving teacher. This often had a negative impact on the school's limited financial resources. Principals in these schools saw internal professional learning and development with an external facilitator as a way to overcome this. However the availability of an external facilitator was often a constraint.

Constant changes to staffing had implications for the continuity of teacher learning. The significant experience and knowledge gained by individual teachers through their involvement in their school's professional learning and development programme was lost when the teachers left the school. Notwithstanding the fact that departing teachers took the knowledge they had acquired to their new schools, senior managers still faced the need to provide new staff with refresher or induction programmes to ensure programme continuity.

Schools with good systems to manage their PLD could demonstrate the impact their programmes were having on improved teacher practice and student outcomes. However, variability in the quality of PLD management signals a place for Ministry of Education guidelines to support schools in managing their PLD programmes.

The self-review questions included in each section of this report are intended to provide a basis for regular reflection at school and syndicate level.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that principals and senior managers:
- assess the quality of their own management of professional learning and development with reference to the three groups of schools discussed in this report;
- develop a rationale and plan for professional learning and development focused on improving teaching and learning, and student outcomes;
- establish processes to sustain new practice; and
- review and/or establish practices to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their PLD.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education consider producing guidelines to support primary schools in their management of professional learning and development.

SELF REVIEW: QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SCHOOL.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS
1. In which of the three groups would we place our school?
2. How well do our teachers understand our school's strategy or approach to professional learning and development?
3. What do we think are the strengths and weaknesses of our school's approach to professional learning and development?
4. What outcomes have there been as a result of our school's professional learning and development?

PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING
1. What evidence informs our school's plan for professional learning and development?
2. What do we expect to happen as a result of our school's plan for professional learning and development?
3. How would we know if our professional learning and development plan was successful?
4. How does our professional learning and development plan relate to our school's overall efforts to improve teaching and learning?

RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOL CULTURE AND PRACTICES

1. To what extent are our teachers working together to achieve our school's vision for professional learning and development?
2. How do our school leaders influence our professional learning and development?
3. How well do staff other than the principal, lead aspects of our school's professional learning and development?
4. How do teachers get good quality feedback about their classroom teaching?
5. How often do teachers at our school refer to analyses of student achievement to inform their classroom planning and activities?

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. To what extent do we routinely collect evidence about the effectiveness of our professional learning and development?
2. What other evidence could our school draw on to evaluate our professional learning and development?
3. How does our current analysis of student achievement information provide insight into the effectiveness of our professional learning and development? What can we do better to enhance this analysis?
4. How do we know that new teaching practices are effective in our classrooms?
5. How can we tell that changes have occurred in classroom teaching as a result of our professional learning and development programmes?

CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

1. What are the main barriers or challenges to our school developing an effective approach to professional learning and development?
2. How sustainable are newly learnt and implemented teaching strategies?
3. What is our school doing to embed teachers' professional learning and development in day-to-day classroom practice?

IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. What has changed as a direct result of professional learning and development?
2. What have been the more effective types of professional learning and development for our school?
3. Which have been the less effective and/or useful? Why is this so?

Appendix 1: ERO's indicator framework for the review of school management of professional learning and development

Indicator	Characteristics

School goals for professional learning and development[17]	The school goals for professional learning and development are:
	• focused on improving student educational achievement (knowledge and skills) and/or
	  – improving student engagement;
	  – developing student social skills (including values and competencies);
	• represent a potentially valuable improvement in student performance;
	• realistic and achievable;
	• take into account any 'supply' problems that may occur in delivering quality professional learning and development (including accessing quality providers, travel, affordability and isolation);
	• measurable in some form or another;[18]
	• are understood and accepted by the staff and board;
	• provide an opportunity for most (if not all) teachers to improve their practice;
	• have been informed by an analysis of the school context including a balanced understanding of:
	  – wider school planning and development, (including the interests of the board);
	  – educational research,
	  – teacher interests and needs (including the development needs as identified through the appraisal process),
	  – school self-review and evaluation;
	  – the interest and needs of families, whānau and the wider community; and
	  – student social and academic needs (including student achievement results).

APPENDIX 1

17 School goals could include school-wide, departmental, syndicate and individual teacher goals depending on the context.

18 Although 'attribution' may be more complex.

Indicator	Characteristics
School planning for professional development	The school's planning for professional learning and development: • reflects the school goals for professional learning and development; • demonstrates a realistic process and timeline for the school professional learning and development goals to be achieved; • takes into account any 'supply' problems that may occur in delivering quality professional learning and development (including accessing quality providers, travel, affordability and isolation); • is affordable and manageable in terms of teacher time and resources; and • clearly sets out the key steps, processes, timelines and responsibilities.

Decision-making	The school's decisions about how school professional learning and development *will actually proceed:*
	• reflect the school-wide goals and plans for professional learning and development (and all that is outlined in these indicators above); especially the school's analysis of its:
	  – wider school planning and development, (including the interests of the board);
	  – educational research,
	  – teacher interests and needs (including the development needs as identified through the appraisal process),
	  – school self-review and evaluation;
	  – the interests and needs of families, whānau and the wider community; and
	  – student social and academic needs (including student achievement results).
	• adequately manages any barriers or challenges to achieving the school's goals and plans for professional learning and development;
	• takes into account any 'supply' problems that may occur in delivering quality professional learning and development (including accessing quality providers, travel, affordability and isolation); and
	• takes into account any PLD opportunities that may present, without compromising the importance the need to inform the school's PLD plan with evidence from the above list.

Indicator	Characteristics
School professional learning and development culture[19]	*Context for professional learning and development* • Teachers have time for engaging with the professional learning material. • Teachers are challenged on their assumptions about learning. • The school uses external expertise for important aspects of their professional learning and/or development. • Teachers collaborate in planning and evaluating each others classroom teaching. • There are regular opportunities for reflection and dialogue with other teachers. • Aside from senior management, there are teachers who lead the staff in elements of professional learning and development. • School leaders are active participants in regular professional activities and discussions. • There is a shared vision and focus on improving student achievement. *The content of professional learning and development* • There is a well-developed integration of educational research, (theory), practice and assessment information. • PLD is aligned to well developed school goals for improving teaching and learning. • Professional activities are strongly linked to changes in classroom activity. • Emphasis is placed on the importance of teacher/student relationships. • There are analyses of student achievement information to help understand the impact of new classroom activities. *Activities to promote professional learning* • There are a variety of professional activities that engage teaching staff. • The content and nature of professional learning and development is discussed and negotiated with staff. *Learning processes and teachers' responses* • There is evidence that teachers have changed their ideas about student learning.

19 See also Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis.* Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Indicator	Characteristics
School-wide professional development	*Context for professional learning and development* • Teachers have time for engaging with the professional learning material. • Teachers are challenged on their assumptions about learning. • The school uses well-regarded external facilitators for important aspects of their professional learning and/or development. • Teachers collaborate in planning and evaluating each others classroom teaching. • There are regular opportunities for reflection and dialogue with other teachers. • Aside from senior management, there are teachers who lead the staff in elements of professional learning and development. • School leaders are active participants in regular professional activities and discussions. • There is a shared vision and focus on improving student achievement. *The content of professional learning and development* • There is a well-developed integration of educational research, (theory), practice and assessment information. • PLD is aligned to well developed school goals for improving teaching and learning. • Professional activities are strongly linked to changes in classroom activity. • Emphasis is placed on the importance of teacher/student relationships. • There are analyses of student achievement information to help understand the impact of new classroom activities. *Learning processes and teachers' responses* • There is evidence that teachers have changed their ideas about student learning. • There is evidence that students have benefited (socially and/or academically) from changes to classroom learning.

Indicator	Characteristics

Individual teacher PLD programmes	• Individual teacher PLD programmes have been informed by:
	  – school professional learning and development goals;
	  – wider school planning and development, (including the interests of the board);
	  – educational research,
	  – personal and professional interests and needs (including the development needs as identified through the appraisal process),
	  – school self-review and evaluation;
	  – the interests and needs of families, whānau and the wider community; and
	  – student social and academic needs (including student achievement results).
	• The individual teacher PLD programmes support the school to achieve the school goals for PLD.
	• The individual PLD programmes are sustainable in terms of school finances and teacher workload.

The monitoring and evaluation of PLD	• The school's monitoring and evaluation of professional learning and development collects evidence about the impact of:
	  – school-wide professional learning and development; and
	  – the development programmes of individual teachers.
	• Impact information includes possible changes to the school's organisation and structure, teacher attitudes and practices and student social skills, engagement and achievement.
	• Schools are not expected to have systems for definitively establishing the impact of professional learning and development, but rather processes that help them understand what, if any changes have occurred in the educational context, and, to a reasonable extent, how PLD is likely to have contributed to these changes. (*Evidence not proof.*)
	• The school's monitoring and evaluation of professional learning and development is able to inform the school's approach to future PLD activities.

Indicator	Characteristics
The sustainability of PLD	• The schools' approach to professional learning and development is likely to develop and maintain improvements in teaching practice. • The school's approach to professional learning and development is also likely to be affordable as well as practical in terms of teacher workload and the induction of new staff.

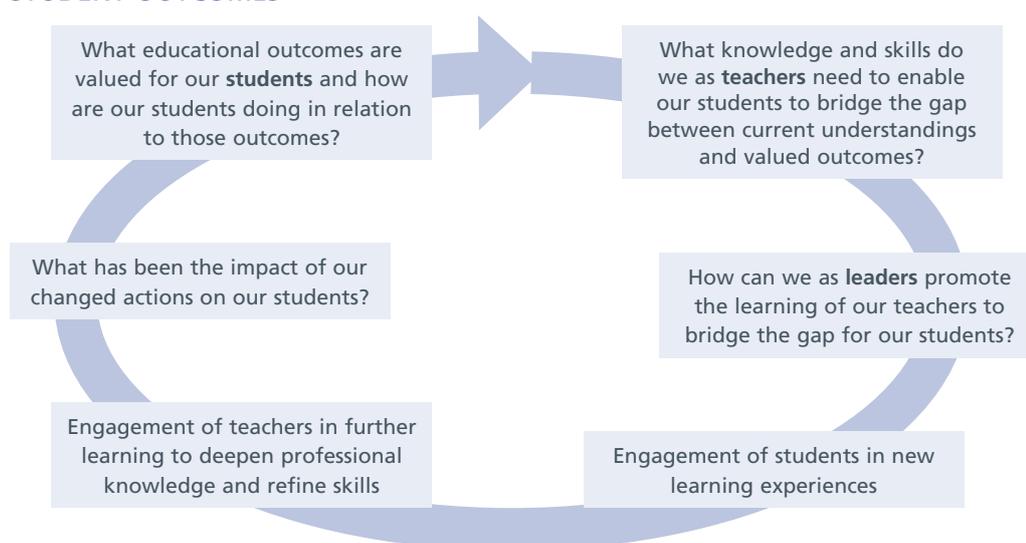## Appendix 2: Principles of professional learning and development

Helen Timperley, lead author for the *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)* has synthesised 10 principles of this book in a monograph for the International Academy of Education (IAE).[20]

Some of the underlying expectations of these 10 principles include:
- active school leaders who have a vision for professional learning lead and organise staff learning;
- a focus on student outcomes and the links to classroom practice;
- worthwhile content related to the local context and based on the findings of established educational research;
- use of assessment information about the performance of teachers and students;
- experts who facilitate teachers to develop their own understandings of new ideas; and
- a programme to sustain momentum, where theoretical understandings continue to develop teacher practice.

Timperley uses a diagram to illustrate how the principles are drawn together in an 'inquiry and knowledge-building cycle' to guide school leaders and teachers in planning their professional learning and development programme (p.20).

TEACHER INQUIRY AND KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING CYCLES TO PROMOTE VALUED STUDENT OUTCOMES

What educational outcomes are valued for our **students** and how are our students doing in relation to those outcomes?

What knowledge and skills do we as **teachers** need to enable our students to bridge the gap between current understandings and valued outcomes?

How can we as **leaders** promote the learning of our teachers to bridge the gap for our students?

Engagement of students in new learning experiences

Engagement of teachers in further learning to deepen professional knowledge and refine skills

What has been the impact of our changed actions on our students?

20 Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development.* Perth: International Academy of Education.

APPENDIX 3

Appendix 3: Checklist for planning professional learning and development

Thomas Guskey (2000)[21] provides a pragmatic and useful approach for those who are evaluating their school's professional learning and development. The book discusses in detail how school leaders can effectively measure the quality of their professional learning and development and identify what contributes to student learning. A comprehensive checklist provides a range of ideas that will help school leaders to plan and evaluate their professional learning and development programme.

Some key steps in the checklist include:
• clarify the professional learning and development goals;
• analyse the school's context (eg teacher and organisation strengths, weaknesses and characteristics;
• estimate the programme's potential to meet the school's goals;
• determine how the goals can be assessed;
• outline the strategies for gathering evidence;
• gather and analyse evidence of the participants' reactions and learning;
• gather and analyse evidence of the school's organisational changes;
• gather and analyse evidence of the participants' use of new knowledge and skills;
• gather and analyse evidence of student learning outcomes;
• prepare and present evaluation reports.

There are several important details underlying each of these key steps. While it is not possible to discuss these in detail here, there are particular principles of this approach that can be emphasised.

One of these principles is the need for school leaders to collect a range of evidence about the effectiveness of a professional development activity. Forms of evidence include changes in student social or academic outcomes, changes in teacher practice and changes in school systems as a result of professional learning and development.

21 Guskey, T. (2000).
   *Evaluating professional
   development* (p. 253).
   California: Corwin Press.

APPENDIX 4

Appendix 4: Methodology

SCHOOLS IN THE OVERALL STUDY

ERO evaluated how well schools managed PLD in 361 primary and secondary schools in Terms 1 and 2 of 2008. The evaluation took place as part of each school's ERO education review. Of the 361 schools, 317 were primary schools and 44 were secondary schools.

The 317 primary schools fell into the categories of full primary (164), contributing schools (133) and intermediate schools (20). This sample is similar to the national percentages in both full primary and contributing schools and replicates exactly the national percentage for intermediate schools. Thirty percent of schools were rural.

The proportion of primary schools in the mid and high decile bands was similar to national percentages with a slightly lower proportion in the low decile band. There were 80 low decile primary schools (25 percent), 139 mid decile schools (44 percent) and 98 high decile schools (31 percent).

When considered by size, the sample included 130 small schools1[22] (41 percent), 78 medium sized schools (25 percent) and 109 large schools (34 percent). The sample is slightly weighted towards larger schools when compared with a national sample.

Of the 361 schools, 44 were secondary or composite schools. This latter group comprised 25 Years 9 to 15 schools, 10 Years 7 to 15 schools, and nine Years 1 to 15 schools. Thirty-seven were located in urban areas and seven were rural.

The proportion of secondary schools in each decile band was similar to national percentages. There were 15 low decile secondary schools (34 percent), 19 mid decile secondary schools (43 percent), and 10 high decile secondary schools (23 percent).

Thirteen of the secondary schools[23] (30 percent) were small, which was very similar to the national percentage (31 percent). There were just nine medium-sized secondary schools (20 percent), which is below the national average of 33 percent. There was a higher proportion of large secondary schools with 22 (50 percent) compared to the national average of 36 percent.

22 Small primary schools are those with fewer than 150 students. Medium-sized primary schools have 150-300 students. Large primary schools have over 300 students.

23 Small secondary schools are those with fewer than 300 students. Medium-sized secondary schools have 300 to 700 students. Large secondary schools are those over 700 students.

EVALUATION APPROACH

ERO gathered and analysed information in response to the following evaluation questions:

- How well is PLD managed for the benefit of teachers and students?
- What is the quality of the school's planning and decision-making for PLD?
- How well does the school's implementation of PLD support ongoing teacher development?
- What changes have occurred for teachers and students as a result of PLD?

The 2008 *BES* document *Teacher Professional Learning and Development* provided the basis for the indicator framework review officers used to evaluate the management of PLD at each school. Because PLD can vary in its design from school to school, the flexibility of this framework allowed review officers to consider various forms of good practice while answering the questions above.[24]

ERO did not evaluate the quality of specific professional development initiatives undertaken by schools. For instance, where a school or a department in a school had been engaged in a particular professional development initiative, ERO did not evaluate the effectiveness of this programme, but rather focused on the school's management of all PLD especially in relation to goals for improving student achievement.

ERO judgements were further informed through a school questionnaire and individual surveys from some or all of the teachers at each school.[25] The school questionnaire collected data on the school's planning and spending on PLD; the nature and broad outcomes of any school-wide PLD initiatives; as well as any barriers or challenges the school faced in accessing high quality PLD.

The teacher survey provided information from staff members on the types of PLD undertaken, including an indication of the most effective PLD undertaken in the last 18 months; the decision making processes teachers used to choose their PLD programme; and an outline of the teacher experience of school PLD practices (for instance how often informal and formal PLD events occurred, what these involved).

Both the school questionnaire and the teacher survey material have been aggregated to provide a national perspective.

24 *Appendix 2* has a summary of this indicator framework.

25 Review teams used the surveys to help get a picture of professional learning and development across the staff. The number of surveys therefore varied between schools, although a maximum of 25 surveys was set as a guideline.

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