

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **“Fewer tests, broader curriculum,” trustees told**

Implementing the Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT) can allow teachers to do less formal testing, a principal told trustees at the NZSTA annual conference over the weekend.

The biggest surprise was that following implementation of PaCT teachers now felt encouraged to teach a broader curriculum than before.

Conference-goers heard that over the three years the school has been using PaCT they have been able to completely replace the old summative assessment (testing) tools with the new framework. It was important for teachers to establish the credibility of the PaCT framework for themselves, and become confident using it, so implementation had meant running their traditional assessments in parallel until it became obvious that the results of both systems were coming out the same.

Teachers are now confident enough of their ability to assess progress and achievement directly from student work using the PaCT that they have now discontinued test-based assessment altogether.

Instead, teachers are now using students' actual class work to assess their progress and achievement in class and this has freed up time previously spent on assessment testing so there is now more time to teach. Assessment is done using student work across the curriculum including science, social studies and the arts as students need to use their reading, writing and math skills to communicate what they know in every subject.

#### **Testing not required at primary schools**

Primary schools have no obligation to test students, only to provide an overall teacher judgement (OTJ) of their achievement. A range of assessment tools are used to help teachers make these judgements, but until now there has been no consistent tool that applies right through a student's primary schooling (years 1-8).

PaCT was introduced in response to concerns from schools about the reliability and validity of national standards data. PaCT allows teachers to map their knowledge about a student's

*In our children lies our future - E tipu e rea*

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progress to the national standards, by providing illustrated examples (exemplars) of each curriculum level in each aspect of reading, writing and maths.

Using the PaCT framework, teachers identify the national standards level they believe a student is achieving at (the Overall Teacher Judgement or OTJ) then work through the illustrations to confirm or amend that initial judgement. Staff are able to share with each other if they want a second opinion.

Nation-wide results show 93% of initial OTJs are confirmed by the teacher without amendment. Over 400 schools are now using the framework, with another 400 who have expressed an interest in implementing it.

A staged implementation plan is recommended to ensure that introducing PaCT is effective, and doesn't add to teacher workloads in the long term.

Along with information about individual students' achievement levels and progress over the year for teachers to use in planning lessons, PaCT can provide reports showing the patterns of achievement and learning needs for classes, groups of students (cohorts), the whole school, or groups of schools (e.g. Communities of Learning).

As well as using the framework to inform classroom teaching and school-wide reporting, at least one school is now sending individual PaCT reports home to parents as the basis for discussion at parent-teacher interviews. Initial responses have been very positive from both teachers and parents

### **Consistency, not Uniformity**

Using the PaCT framework provides consistency, not uniformity says NZSTA President, Lorraine Kerr. Using PaCT is voluntary and there is no "one right way" of using the framework. Instead, each school decides how they want to use the PaCT. Benchmarking using the PaCT exemplars is what creates consistency.

Boards of trustees have a responsibility to ensure that students in their school get the benefit of the whole curriculum, and there have been some 'speed wobbles' trying to get the balance right but it appears that the work done by officials and sector groups to ensure that assessment practices support the richness of the whole curriculum are beginning to pay off in the longer term, says Ms Kerr.

The NZSTA annual conference was held in Wellington over the weekend of 15-17 July and was attended by over 900 school trustees, including parent-elected trustees, student and staff trustees and principals.

## **Ends**

*Enquiries regarding this release can be made to Lorraine Kerr, President, NZSTA at 0276875606*