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Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

School Improvement Framework (SIF)

Explainer:

Practices at highly effective schools

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Qualities of schools excelling across all SIF domains

The School Improvement Framework (SIF) is the evaluation tool that helps schools and ERO to determine where each school is at in its improvement journey and to agree next improvement steps. This explainer document provides a high-level outline of the SIF and the practices in place at highly effective schools to ensure the best possible outcomes for learners.

Evidence based theory of improvement.

The theory of improvement describes how different domains work together for school improvement. It is based on national and international evidence about what works to improve learner outcomes, the domains that have the biggest impact, and supporting conditions that need to be in place. You can read more about the evidence base of each domain and the theory of improvement in the [SIF Guide](#).

Theory of Improvement

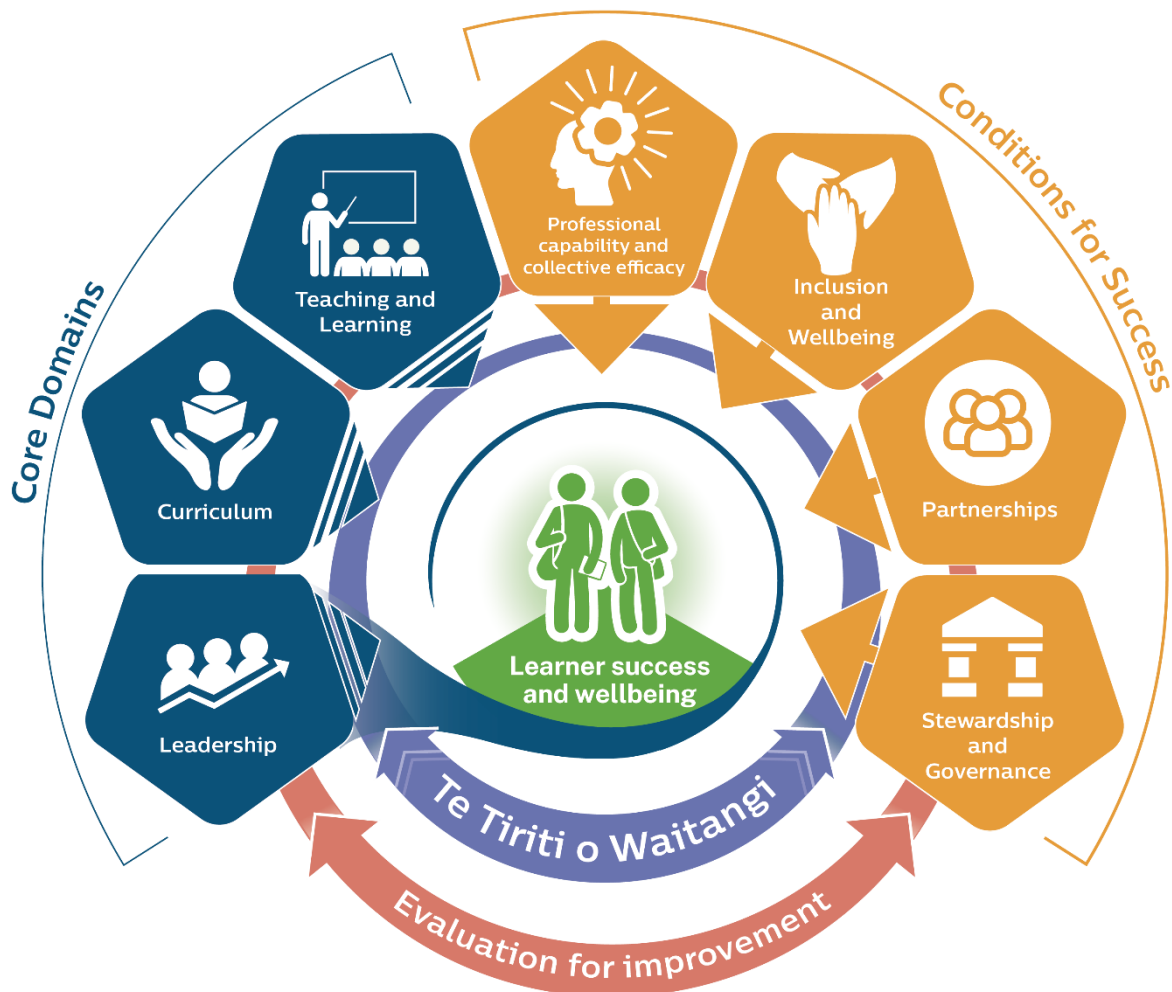


Diagram 1. Theory of Improvement

Structure

The structure of the SIF reflects the theory of improvement. It is centered on learner outcomes and wellbeing (Diagram 1). 'Core domains' have the biggest impact on learner outcomes. 'Conditions for success' details what needs to be in place to support improved outcomes for learners and ensure the core domains have the maximum impact.

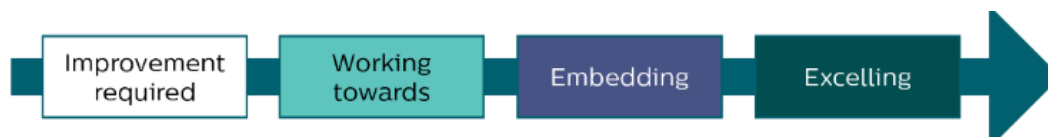


Diagram 2. Progression steps

Each domain is described in more detail across several elements. The quality of practice across domains and elements is described using progression steps, from 'improvement required' through to 'excelling.' This document describes what excelling practice looks like. Full descriptions of progression steps for each element can be found [in the SIF Guide](#).

'Improvement required' indicates that key aspects are not present or not working effectively and urgent improvement is required to support learner success and wellbeing.

'Working towards' indicates that efforts are being actively made to put in place key aspects but there is variability, or they are not embedded.

'Embedding' indicates that key aspects are in place and there is a focus on integrating these across the school.

'Excelling' indicates that all key aspects are embedded and sustained, and the school is demonstrating innovation and contributing knowledge and expertise across the sector.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT) is the 'foundation for success' woven throughout all other domains as well as presented together to support schools that are focusing on this domain.

Areas of alignment, requirements or obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Education and Training Act (2020, including 2025 amendments), professional frameworks such as the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Educational Leadership Framework, the Standards for the Teaching Profession (2025) and Tātaiako are identified within each domain to provide clarity for schools.

Evaluation for Improvement

The 'evaluation for improvement' domain spans across the SIF and considers a school's internal evaluation practices and capability – a key practice for sustained school improvement.

Using the SIF

Together, the domains of the SIF paint a comprehensive picture of all the things that need to be considered for school improvement.

Schools use the SIF as part of their internal evaluations, and ERO uses the SIF in partnership with schools as part of its external evaluations.

School leaders look at a range of evidence to determine where on the SIF their school currently sits.

Schools will be asked to consider their evidence and use the SIF to reflect on and consider their practice across domains; make judgements about where their school is at currently; and identify next improvement steps.

This helps schools to make sure they are in the best possible position to help every student reach their full potential.

ERO will then work with the school's SIF judgements and supporting evidence, validating and verifying the evidence the school has provided as part of the external evaluation cycle.

Outcomes: Learner success and wellbeing

Highly effective schools that are excelling across all SIF domains will see equitable and excellent outcomes for learners. Described as learner success and wellbeing, the outcome of practice at the 'excelling' progression step is that every learner is supported to reach their full potential in an environment that nurtures their physical, social, emotional and cultural health and wellbeing as well as their academic potential.

Learner success means all students, regardless of background, learn and progress, achieve their goals and improve over time. It means that students are equipped to fully participate in their communities as active and informed citizens and are well prepared for work or further study. A key enabler for learner success is wellbeing, ensuring that learning happens in a safe and inclusive environment, and that learners' sense of belonging and identity, language and culture are valued and celebrated. Excellent outcomes at a system level means equity for all learners, acknowledging students arrive at school with different knowledge and abilities, but the same rights to achieving learning success.

What does learner success and wellbeing look like?

- **A sense of belonging:** Students feel like they belong at school and are proud of who they are, their identity, language and culture.
- **Attending and engaged:** Students are regularly at school and are actively engaged in meaningful learning.
- **Making progress:** Students achieve at the appropriate curriculum level or phase throughout their schooling and develop strong foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, including literacy, communication and mathematics.
- **Setting goals together:** Students' achievement goals are relevant to them and set in partnership with whānau and teachers.
- **Student voice:** Students have choices in their learning and are involved in key decisions taken by the school.
- **Safe, healthy and inclusive schools:** Students are physically, emotionally and culturally safe and healthy in an environment that is inclusive and free from racism, discrimination and bullying.
- **Valuing Māori culture and language:** Students understand their role in honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi by active participation in te reo Māori, tikanga Māori and understanding of mātauranga Māori.
- **Prepared for the future:** Students progress towards recognised school qualifications and are well-prepared for further study, training or employment.
- **Engaged and active citizens:** Students are confident and active participants in their communities, country and the world.

Core Domains





Leadership

Leadership has a significant effect on the excellence and equity of learner achievement and wellbeing (Robinson, 2011).

Learners reach their full potential when school leadership guides, influences and builds trust and partnerships to create a thriving learning community. Effective school leadership enhances teaching quality, learner engagement, and improves learner success and wellbeing (Leithwood, 2020).

Effective leaders use a broad range of data, evaluation, knowledge, and inquiry in a systematic and coherent manner to gauge impact for learners and inform future action. By fostering a culture of data-driven decision making to improve the quality of teaching and learning, leaders enhance learner outcomes and narrow achievement gaps (Day et al., 2016).

Effective school leadership:

- Collaboratively develops a shared vision that reflects the board's priorities and aspirations of learners and whānau and aligns school-wide goals with learner needs. Then, relentlessly pursues clear goals and targets (Meyer et al., 2023), motivating both learners and teachers to strive for excellence and creating a culture of high expectations, continuous improvement and accountability (Robinson, 2019).
- Promotes teacher collaboration and growth, and participates in teacher professional learning and development, contributing to enhanced collaboration, improved teaching quality and, subsequently, improved learner outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2009; Dempster, 2019).
- Prioritises a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment where all learners feel valued and supported, building a sense of belonging to enhance learners' wellbeing, engagement and achievement (Leithwood, 2017).
- Fosters strong connections and relational trust between schools, whānau, parents, and the broader community to create a supportive network for learners, leading to increased learner success through collaborative efforts, collective decision-making, and a shared commitment to school improvement. (Byrk and Schneider, 2003; Barrett, 2018)

Excellent school leadership aligns with requirements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT2), the School Evaluation Indicators (Domain 2), Teaching Council Leadership Capability Framework and National Education Learning Priorities (Objective 3).

L1	Improvement goals Leadership sets and relentlessly pursues a small number of targeted and coherent improvement goals and targets including the acceleration of progress for those learners at risk of underachievement.
L2	Culture of quality teaching Leadership fosters and sustains a culture committed to quality teaching, and equity and excellence in learner outcomes.
L3	Evidence-based planning for improvement Leadership uses a range of appropriate and high-quality evidence to coherently plan and monitor the school's strategic improvement cycle and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to improve learner outcomes and wellbeing.
L4	High quality evidence-informed teaching Leadership ensures effective planning, coordination and evaluation of the school's curriculum and teaching; expectations for high-quality, evidence-informed teaching are clear, shared and systematically monitored.
L5	Networks and relationships to support transitions and success Leadership builds and sustains strong, educationally-focused relationships with other education providers and community groups to support seamless learner transitions and increase opportunities for learning and success.
L6	Trust and collaboration for improvement Leadership builds and sustains high levels of relational trust and effective collaboration at every level of the school community to achieve the strategic vision and improvement goals.
L7	Whānau involvement in decision making (TT2) Leaders consistently involve whānau, hapū and iwi in decision making. The school's vision, goals, targets and priorities reflect those set out by whānau, hapū and iwi, and are anchored in a thoughtful understanding of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
L8	Attraction and retention Leaders attract, retain and grow effective teaching teams. Appropriate and timely support is consistently provided for provisionally certificated teachers, and to develop leadership capability.
L9	Feedback and performance management for PLD Leaders effectively use multiple sources of feedback, coherent performance management processes that are aligned with the school's strategic goals and identify teachers' professional learning and development needs.



Curriculum

The curriculum is the heart of the day-to-day business of the school, outlining the knowledge and skills learners are taught each day. An effective curriculum is essential to learner success by providing a structured, sequential, and coherent framework for teaching and learning that is aligned with educational goals, standards, and individual learner needs. A coherent, whole-school approach to curriculum is important so that learners can progress in a systematic way across classes and year levels. Learning objectives, content, and assessment strategies need to align across the whole school in order to optimise the educational outcomes of all learners. (Schleicher, 2018; Hunter and Haywood 2023).

A well-designed whole-school curriculum reduces barriers to learning and provides opportunities for students to engage in deep and meaningful learning across the full range of curriculum areas. The curriculum is responsive to diverse learning needs, adapts to evolving educational knowledge, and incorporates local contexts and real-world relevance, thus enhancing learner engagement and motivation (Fadel, 2015).

Such a curriculum not only supports deep understanding of subject matter but also promotes critical thinking, creativity, and essential life skills, cultivating a solid foundation for lifelong learning. (Schleicher, 2018).

Te Mātaiaho, The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMoA) set out the national expectations and requirements for teaching and learning. The national curriculum documents outline the learning that all learners should experience in New Zealand schools. The relevance of the curriculum is enhanced when it draws on mutually beneficial local relationships and contexts to support learning. For students, these relationships foster their sense of place, develop their understanding of learning areas, and enable opportunities to explore values derived from an understanding of, and respect for, the place and environment in which the school is located (Te Mātaiaho, Ministry of Education, 2025).

Excellent curriculum aligns with requirements under the Education and Training Act 2020, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT3, TT4 and TT5) and the Teaching Standards Leadership Capabilities, and the School Evaluation Indicators
Domain 4.

C1	Rich learning opportunities and foundational skills Learners have rich opportunities to learn across the breadth and depth of the NZC/TMoA; there is a consistent focus on supporting learners to gain sound foundation skills, including literacy, communication and mathematics.
C2	Stakeholder aspirations incorporated into curriculum (TT4) The aspirations of all key stakeholders including learners, whānau, hapū and iwi are addressed through an explicit, sequenced school-wide curriculum.
C3	Curriculum reflects local contexts and learner understanding (TT5) Local contexts are reflected throughout the curriculum in a way that builds from learners' experiences, knowledge and understanding. Consequently, the school offers a range of relevant and meaningful learning opportunities.
C4	School-wide assessments Appropriate school-wide assessments across curriculum levels and learning areas are explicitly identified and progress markers aligned to the curriculum across the school are embedded across the school. Assessment practices effectively support learner, class and whole-school insights into learner progress during the course of the year and over time.
C5	Effective teaching and learning resources The school's teaching and learning resources support coherent and effective curriculum implementation and classroom teaching.
C6	Support from curriculum leaders Curriculum leadership roles consistently and effectively support teachers' professional understanding and use of teaching resources and tools.
C7	Integrated Te ao Māori learning opportunities (TT3) Te reo, te ao Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori are effectively woven through all aspects of the school's curriculum.
C8	Evidence-based interventions and support Evidence-based interventions effectively target additional support to those learners who require it.



Teaching and Learning

Effective teachers create an environment conducive to meaningful learning experiences and positive learner outcomes. To optimise learning, learners must get meaningful content instruction, receive high-quality feedback, and have their fundamental social and emotional needs met (Marzano, 2017).

Effective teachers hold high expectations for learning for all learners. Effective teaching practice is intentional and responsive to the diverse needs of learners, authentically linking to learner, whānau and community knowledge, goals and aspirations. Deliberate teacher planning provides a clear, structured approach to learning and is informed by appropriate assessment (Hill and Thrupp, 2019).

Teachers scaffold learning through expert use of a range of teaching approaches and deep knowledge of their learners' strengths, needs and interests. Effective teaching practices include communicating high expectations, optimising active learning time, having explicit teaching and learning goals and sequenced learning activities, providing clear explanations and regular questioning to check learner understanding, and allowing sufficient time for learners to practise, deepen and apply new knowledge (Scheerens, 2023; Marzano, 2017).

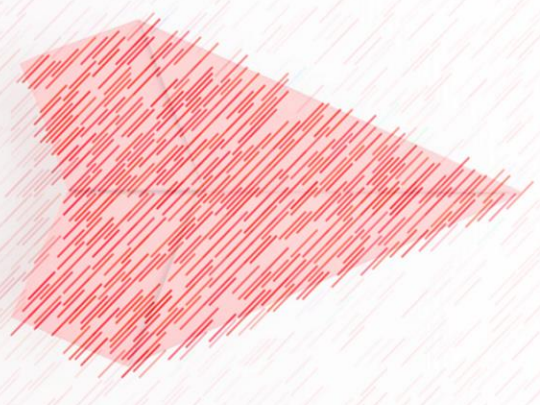
Regular, appropriate, and constructive assessment feedback is a critical feature of effective teaching and learning, as is the ability to plan and teach using this information. Assessment information should enable learners to know how to improve, and support their motivation to persist, engage and achieve. Useful and timely feedback supports learners to know where they are going (learning goals), how they are going (their progress), and where to next (to address gaps, deepen understanding, and increase learner self-regulation and agency) (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie & Zierer, 2019). Classroom programmes should grow and enable the learning of te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori across the curriculum, drawing on a range of culturally-responsive pedagogies and practices that engage learners in purposeful, challenging and relevant learning.

Teachers who establish a safe, respectful, and inclusive atmosphere encourage learner participation, collaboration, and appropriate risk taking in learning. Effective teaching practice is underpinned by culturally-responsive and relational practices, and teaching strategies and pedagogy that acknowledges and enhances learner mana, identity and belonging (Bishop, 2010; Eley & Berryman, 2019).

Excellent teaching and learning aligns with requirements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT7, TT8), the School Evaluation Indicators – Domain 4 and concepts of Manaakitanga, Whanaungatanga, Ako and Mahi tahi.

TL1	Learning environment, clear expectations and outcomes Teachers create a collaborative and orderly learning environment that fosters inclusive participation, in which learning time is maximised and learners are supported to meaningfully engage, experiment, and apply new learning in innovative ways. Positive and mutually respectful teacher-learner relationships are embedded in the classroom.
TL2	Evidence-based and differentiated pedagogies Teachers use a variety of evidence-based and differentiated teaching strategies, including mixed or diverse grouping, to provide cognitively challenging, purposeful and well-paced learning opportunities.
TL3	Scaffolded teaching Teachers intentionally scaffold learning and effectively use knowledge of learners' strengths, needs and interests.
TL4	Learner agency and metacognition Teachers consistently provide explicit instruction in learning strategies that enable learners to develop agency, question and problem solve, demonstrate meta-cognitive skills, self-efficacy and self-regulation.
TL5	Learner engagement in learning Teachers engage learners in learning through effective and purposeful questioning, the use of multiple exposures to concepts, ideas, skills and examples, along with timely and specific feedback.
TL6	Supporting parents and whānau to engage in learning (TT7) Teachers regularly provide relevant and useful support and resources to parents and whānau so they can work in partnership in their child's learning, progress and pathways.
TL7	Assessment for adaptive teaching A range of appropriate high-quality assessment information is effectively used to plan for, evaluate and report the progress and achievement of each learner and to adapt teaching practice to effectively respond to learners' strengths and needs.
TL8	Effective additional supports Learners needing additional support are identified promptly and are provided with relevant, individualised and effective support to learn and progress at an appropriate pace. Those who are succeeding continue to be challenged and extended.
TL9	Culturally-responsive pedagogies (TT8) Teachers effectively use a range of culturally-responsive pedagogies and practices that engage learners with purposeful, engaging and relevant learning.

Conditions for Success





Professional Capability and collective efficacy

The Professional capability and collective efficacy domain has two main but inter-related elements:

- the engagement of school leaders and teachers in professional growth and development to improve their own practices and, in turn, valued educational outcomes.
- the creation of professional learning communities to support growth and knowledge-sharing.

Professional capacity building in schools encompasses the numerous approaches to growing the knowledge and teaching and learning approaches of teachers, both individually and collectively, in order to support improved learning outcomes. In highly effective schools, leaders and teachers work collectively to build knowledge, collaboratively solve problems and achieve shared goals, provide mutual support, and embed a culture of continuous improvement and collective efficacy. By working together on shared goals and using evaluative cycles to identify the areas for capability building (and evaluate the effectiveness of these) schools can learn what is working, for whom, and under what conditions in order to identify and grow those practices that achieve the improvements needed for learners at that school.

A culture of strong relational trust is important so that school leaders and teachers can be open and support each other to grow in their professional capabilities. It is also important for professional capability building that teachers can connect across different schools, learning areas and communities in order to build adaptive expertise (Timperely, 2013).

Culturally-responsive and relational school leaders and teachers are involved in a dynamic cycles of self-reflection and learning, where evidence of outcomes informs new understandings and consideration of what may need to change (Berryman, 2022). Effective leaders and teachers are fully committed to growing their own confidence in te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori knowledge and capability so that they can grow the collective capacity of their learners (TCANZ, 2025).

Professional capability and collective efficacy aligns with requirements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT6, TT9, TT10), the Teaching Council's Standards and Leadership Capability Framework, and the School Evaluation Indicators – Domain 5, NELP Priority 5.

PCCE1	High aspirations and shared responsibility The school's professional learning community shares high and equitable aspirations for the achievement, progress, and wellbeing of all learners. Leaders and teachers take shared responsibility for learner outcomes and work collectively to improve conditions for learning.
PCCE2	Trust-based communication and collaboration for professional agency High levels of relational trust and effective communication supports deliberate and coherent collaboration, improvement, and innovation, and contributes to professional agency at every level of the school.
PCCE3	Collective approaches to improving teaching practice Teachers regularly work collectively in planned ways, such as modelling, observing and providing constructive feedback to inquire into targeted aspects of their teaching practice to support learner progress and achievement.
PCCE4	Prioritisation of ongoing professional growth Leaders and teachers prioritise and engage in effective, targeted ongoing professional growth and development to ensure they have high-quality pedagogical expertise and capabilities to effectively support learner progress and wellbeing.
PCCE5	Strategic, evaluated professional learning Professional learning opportunities are strategically aligned with the school's improvement goals and learner needs; leaders and teachers use a range of evidence to monitor and evaluate anticipated changes in practice and learner outcomes.
PCCE6	Valuing culture Leaders and teachers place high value on the cultural backgrounds of their learners and demonstrate this throughout the school's programmes, initiatives and practices.
PCCE7	Building expertise and capability for improvement and innovation Leaders strategically use relevant internal and external expertise, including networking with other schools, to embed capability building, improvement and innovation.
PCCE8	Reflecting on research findings Leaders and teachers regularly and effectively work together to assess the implications of research findings and evidence about learner performance on teaching practice for their school.

PCCE9	Professional learning in te reo and te ao Māori (TT9) Leaders and teaching staff are fully engaged in and committed to ongoing and effective professional learning to improve confidence and capability in te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori knowledge and capability in teaching and learning.
PCCE 10	Data analysis for evidenced-based improvement (TT10) Leaders and teachers confidently collect, analyse, and interpret data from a range of sources including seeking Māori learners and whānau voices. Data informs decision making for school improvement at class, team and school level. The school has sophisticated data collection and management systems. The school has strong, diversified data analysis capability and demonstrates a commitment to growing this capability.
PCCE 11	Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT6) Teachers authentically demonstrate commitment to tangata whenuatanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership by understanding, recognising and celebrating the unique status of tangata whenua.



Inclusion and wellbeing

Learner wellbeing has a clear impact on learner mental health and learning (Ministry of Education, 2017) and significantly impacts learner's academic performance (Govorova et al., 2020). Inclusion is a key aspect of wellbeing (ERO, 2013) and is one of eight principles in The New Zealand Curriculum. ERO uses the following definition of wellbeing specific to education research and evaluation:

Student wellbeing at school is indicated by their satisfaction with life at school, their engagement with learning and their social-emotional behaviour... a sustainable state characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimisation and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences. (Noble et al, 2008, p.30).

It is the ethical and legal responsibility of teachers, leaders and board members to consider and respond to all aspects of the learner; including their physical, social, emotional, academic and spiritual needs. The importance of inclusion and wellbeing sits within the broader context of a range of key legislation, agreements, strategies and frameworks, including:

- The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Teaching Council Code of Professional Responsibility
- The Children's Act 2014.

Inclusion and wellbeing policies and practices should support all learners to have a strong sense of belonging and be confident in their identity, language and culture. Monitoring wellbeing can have a positive impact for students and enable schools to identify students that may need additional support, as well as developing students' understanding and strategies around protective factors (Flack et al., 2022).

Hauora is a well-known model that represents the multifaceted aspects of wellbeing. This includes the physical, mental /emotional, social /whānau and spiritual dimensions of health, which are reflected in the elements below. Concepts in Hauora are unpacked in the Te Whare Tapa Whā model (Durie, 1994) and the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) of wellbeing. This is outlined in the health and physical education learning area (NZC) and are also useful models for understanding the inter-related nature of wellbeing elements. Coherency and consistency in a whole-school approach enables schools to effectively work towards an environment in which learners feel included and experience wellbeing (ERO, 2019).

Excellent inclusion and wellbeing aligns with requirements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT11, TT12, TT13, TT14) and the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Responsibility and Leadership Capability Framework, NELP Priority 1.

IW1	Safe and inclusive environment (TT11) The school provides a physically and emotionally safe and inclusive environment, free from racism, discrimination and bullying, for all learners.
IW2	Identity, language and culture (TT12) Leaders and teachers recognise, affirm, value and cater for the diverse identities, languages and cultures of learners, parents, whānau and the community.
IW3	Wellbeing and inclusion policies and programmes (TT13) Leadership ensures that a comprehensive range of policies, programmes and practices promote learners' wellbeing, inclusion, confidence in their identity, language and culture, and engagement in learning.
IW4	Reducing barriers and supporting access (TT14) Leaders and teachers use a range of effective strategies to reduce barriers to education and support access to learning for all, including for Māori and Pacific learners, disabled learners and those with learning support needs.
IW5	Wellbeing data The school regularly and systematically gathers, analyses, acts on and monitors learners' wellbeing data at a cohort and school level to ensure learners are free from harm and their experiences are mana enhancing.
IW6	Trusting relationships Relationships between staff and learners are founded on mutual trust and allow learners to seek help when required.



Partnerships

Collaboration and partnerships between schools, parents, whānau, employers and the community can significantly improve education outcomes for learners. In addition to growing the school's understanding of – and ability to support – the whole child. Partnerships can also build the confidence and knowledge of parents and whānau to support learning at home. Partnerships build a shared understanding of learning goals, progress and how best to ensure every learner achieves success.

Partnerships enable schools to leverage the knowledge, resources and collective wisdom of their communities to understand what learners need beyond the school gate, share information and co-construct teaching and learning that is meaningful and relevant for learners in that community.

Parents and whānau are key partners in their children's learning. What learners bring with them to school each day is critical to their educational outcomes (Hattie, 2009), just as learning does not stop at the school gate and needs to be supported at home. Whānau support is an essential influence on the successful outcomes of learners. Parents want to support their children's learning but need clear accessible information on what is happening at the school, their children's progress, and how best to support them at home (PICI, 2017). It is critical that whānau and educators work together to set appropriately high expectations and challenging goals, and then work in partnership to achieve these (Hattie, 2009).

Parental involvement in a school benefits not only those learners whose parents are involved in school activities, but also has a beneficial effect on the academic achievement of all students at the school (Park and Holloway, 2017). For our Māori and Pacific learners, we know that strong engagement and contribution from parents and families is one of the biggest factors that makes a difference for these learners. (Ka Hikitia, 2020). Effective partnerships between schools and parents, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities build a sense of identity and belonging that contributes to wellbeing. [Refer to the Inclusion and Wellbeing domain regarding the positive impacts of inclusion and wellbeing on student achievement].

Schools need to build trusting and sustained partnerships with Māori and mana whenua to ensure Māori learners enjoy and achieve educational success as Māori. Engagement between whānau, community groups (including hapū and iwi groups) and schools need to be constructive and strengths-focused, reciprocal and collaborative. This is to benefit the development of learners, and provide them with a broad range of opportunities, experiences, and auxiliary resources in addition to what schools can provide on their own.

Partnerships with the community, professional networks, community service groups and employers can also significantly build the knowledge, resources and expertise a school can draw upon to support both staff and learners. Relationships with industry, employers, and vocational and training providers can support tailored and /or extended learning opportunities. This builds awareness of training and career pathways and opportunities, as well as ensuring the readiness of school leavers for work meets employer expectations. Through partnerships, schools can support learners at transition points between stages of schooling and into further learning or career pathways that align to their goals.

Professional partnerships with other schools as part of learning communities are also vital to support, grow and sustain our essential educator workforce. A partnership approach to building, supporting and growing staff, both within and across schools, not only supports knowledge building and teacher confidence, but improves practice and grows system capability (ERO, 2021).

Excellent partnerships aligns with requirements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT15), National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) Priority 2 and 7, School Evaluation Indicators – Domain 3, and the dimensions for improvement and change in Poutama Reo.



P1	Parents and whānau as learning partners Parents and whānau are respected and valued partners in their child's learning.
P2	Communicating for shared understanding Leaders and teachers use a range of effective communication strategies with parents and whānau to sustain shared understandings of learners' strengths and learning needs, the curriculum and the teaching and learning process, enabling parents and whānau to actively support their child's learning.
P3	Pathways and support Learners, parents, whānau and teachers are well informed about the different pathways, programmes, options and support available; they collaborate in planning and decision making at critical transition points within and beyond school settings.
P4	Partnerships for wellbeing Leaders and teachers proactively identify, draw on, and work with community resources, including other professional and support agencies, to effectively support and improve learner health and wellbeing.
P5	Partnerships for further learning Leaders and teachers build and sustain relationships with industry, employers, and vocational and training providers, to extend and enhance learning opportunities and achievement.
P6	Professional networks Leaders and teachers cultivate and sustain reciprocal professional networks and contribute their knowledge and expertise to system capability building and improvement.
P7	Parents and whānau engagement in the life of the school Leaders and teachers facilitate regular parent and whānau engagement and meaningful participation in the life of the school. This includes their contribution to decision making in a variety of contexts.
P8	Partnerships with Māori (TT15) The school is authentically and actively honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi through building trusting and sustained partnerships with Māori and mana whenua. Māori learners are enjoying and achieving educational success as Māori.



Stewardship and governance

Stewardship refers to the responsibilities, practices, and activities undertaken by a Board to ensure there is effective and responsible management of the school that meets statutory responsibilities. This includes that all learners are achieving well and enables the school to deliver its vision and mission and achieve its goals.

The stewardship role of the board is about accountability and improvement. The board sets strategic direction, oversees the use of resources, monitors performance, and ensures compliance with legal and ethical standards. Board members have a unique responsibility to act in the best interests of the school and to hold it accountable to its stakeholders. Teaching and learning, wellbeing, and student achievement and progress are the board's main concern.

Boards plan for, and act in, the interests of the school and its community in partnership with school leaders and staff, and through engaging with their local community, including mana whenua. Effective boards seek to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori students; take all reasonable steps to provide for students to be taught, and to learn, in te reo Māori on request of their parents or immediate caregivers; and take reasonable steps to ensure that the policies and practices for the school reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity.

Boards ensure accountability for school performance, scrutinising learner wellbeing and achievement data with an explicit focus on improvement. Boards make sure the principal and staff are supported and resourced to achieve high quality teaching and learning, and closely monitor learner wellbeing, achievement and progress. To do this they need reliable and detailed information about the learning and wellbeing of learners at the school.

Excellent stewardship and governance aligns with the Education and Training Act, requirements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (TT16, TT17, TT18) and the Te Tiriti o Waitangi principle of honourable governance (Kawanatanga) and School Evaluation Indicators – Domain 1.

SG1	Board membership and collaboration (TT17) The Board effectively represents, serves, and works with the school community including mana whenua, to collaboratively develop the school's vision, values, strategic direction, improvement priorities and goals related to learner learning, wellbeing, achievement and progress.
SG2	Evidenced-informed strategic decision making The Board closely scrutinises a range of high-quality learner data and evaluative information to identify strategic improvement priorities, plan and make appropriate resourcing decisions.
SG3	School resourcing and principal performance The Board effectively manages and strategically plans for the school's resourcing (financial, property, and human resources) including managing the performance of the principal.
SG4	Statutory obligations and reporting The Board understands and enacts its statutory obligations and effectively implements systems and processes to review and report on its responsibilities, including having policies and procedures that are coherent and fit for purpose.
SG5	School leadership performance The Board effectively holds leaders to account for the performance of the school through strategic scrutiny of learner engagement, wellbeing, progress and achievement data.
SG6	Board performance The Board regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its own performance.
SG7	Information sharing (TT16) The school's results and evaluation findings are meaningfully discussed with key stakeholders including whānau, hapū and iwi.
SG8	The Board seeks to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori students (TT18) The Board is achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students; providing for students to be taught, and to learn, in te reo Māori, and is ensuring that the policies and practices for the school reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity.

Te Tiriti O Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles set out obligations for the Crown and Māori that guide how tangata Tiriti (New Zealanders of non-Māori origin) and tangata whenua can live together with mutual respect. The key principles include rangatiratanga, partnership, participation, active protection and equity. They provide for the active protection of taonga, including te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori, and enable fair and equitable educational processes and outcomes for Māori and for all ākonga (DPMC, 2019; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2001).

This domain as expressed within the School Improvement Framework provides an assessment on how well a school is promoting success of ākonga Māori as Māori. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is, at its essence, about honourable, equitable partnership: it is an agreement to co-exist peacefully while each party retains its language, culture, and identity. Boards, leaders and teachers can deeply reflect the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by honouring the articles of:

- Kawanatanga (honourable governance), by giving Māori a voice in all aspects of governance through genuine engagement and involvement in decision making.
- Rangatiratanga (self-determination), by acknowledging the rights of Māori to have agency, voice, and choice in what happens in schools.
- Ōritetanga (equity), by co-designing for equity. This means engaging with whānau Māori to design plans, programmes, and environments, rather than merely inviting them to consult on existing plans and ideas (Riki-Waaka, 2023).

Effective boards honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by seeking to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori students; providing quality teaching and learning in te reo Māori for all students; and ensuring that the policies and practices for the school reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity (Education and Training Amendment Act 2025).

Schools should support all learners to understand their role in honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi by providing opportunities for active participation in te reo Māori, tikanga Māori and include knowledge that reflects te ao Māori. Schools and kura working with hapū and iwi may choose to include local mātauranga Māori in their teaching and learning programmes. (Te Mātaiaho 2025).

Māori learners are entitled to a learning environment that fosters a strong sense of belonging and confidence in their identity, language and culture. To support this, school leaders and teachers should fully commit to growing their own confidence in te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori knowledge and capability so that they can grow the collective capacity of their learners (TCANZ, 2017). Culturally-responsive school leaders and teachers are involved in a dynamic and spiraling process of critical self-reflection and learning where evidence of current practice and outcomes for Māori learners informs new understandings of the implications of current practice, and in turn understanding of what needs to change to accelerate improved outcomes for Māori learners (Berryman, 2022).

Elements within the Te Tiriti o Waitangi domain align with requirements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Education and Training Act 2020 (as amended), Cabinet office and Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Guidance, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Standards 2026 for the Teaching Profession, and Poutama Reo.

TT1	Learner understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi Learners understand their role in honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as they are provided with high quality opportunities for active participation in te reo Māori and tikanga Māori and articulating a broad understanding of mātauranga Māori.
TT2	Whānau involvement in decision making (L7) Leaders consistently involve whānau, hapū and iwi in decision making. The school's vision, goals, targets and priorities reflect those set out by whānau, hapū and iwi, and are anchored in a thoughtful understanding of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
TT3	Integrated te ao Māori learning opportunities (C7) Te reo Māori, te ao Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori are effectively woven through all aspects of the school's curriculum.
TT4	Stakeholder aspirations incorporated into curriculum (C2) The aspirations of all key stakeholders including learners, whānau, hapū and iwi are addressed through an explicit, sequenced school-wide curriculum.
TT5	Curriculum reflects local contexts and learner understanding (C3) Local contexts are reflected throughout the curriculum in a way that builds from learners' experiences, knowledge and understanding. Consequently, the school offers a range of relevant and meaningful learning opportunities.
TT6	Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (PCCE11) Teachers authentically demonstrate commitment to tangata whenuatanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership by understanding, recognising and celebrating the unique status of tangata whenua.
TT7	Supporting parents and whānau to engage in learning (TL6) Teachers regularly provide relevant and useful support and resources to parents and whānau so they can work in partnership in their child's learning, progress and pathways.

TT8	Culturally-responsive pedagogies (TL9) Teachers effectively use a range of culturally-responsive pedagogies and practices that engage learners with purposeful, engaging and relevant learning.
TT9	Professional learning in te reo and te ao Māori (PCCE9) Leaders and teaching staff are fully engaged in and committed to ongoing and effective professional learning to improve confidence and capability in te reo me ona tikanga, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori knowledge and capability in teaching and learning.
TT10	Data analysis for evidence-based improvement (PCCE10) Leaders and teachers confidently collect, analyse, and interpret data from a range of sources including seeking Māori learners and whānau voices. Data informs decision making for school improvement at class, team and school level. The school has sophisticated data collection and management systems. The school has strong, diversified data analysis capability and demonstrates a commitment to growing this capability.
TT11	Safe and inclusive environment (IW1) The school provides a physically and emotionally safe and inclusive environment, free from racism, discrimination and bullying, for all learners.
TT12	Identity, language and culture (IW2) Leaders and teachers recognise, affirm, value and cater for the diverse identities, languages and cultures of learners, parents, whānau and the community.
TT13	Wellbeing and inclusion policies and programmes (IW3) Leadership ensures that a comprehensive range of policies, programmes and practices promote learners' wellbeing, inclusion, confidence in their identity, language and culture; and engagement in learning.

TT14	Reducing barriers and supporting access (IW4) Leaders and teachers use a range of effective strategies to reduce barriers to education and support access to learning for all, including for Māori and Pacific learners, disabled learners and those with learning support needs.
TT15	Partnerships with Māori (P8) The school is authentically and actively giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi through building trusting and sustained partnerships with Māori and mana whenua, Māori learners are enjoying and achieving educational success as Māori.
TT16	Information sharing (SG7) The school's results and evaluation findings are discussed and scrutinised with key stakeholders including whānau, hapū and iwi.
TT17	Board membership and collaboration (SG1) The board effectively represents, serves and works with the school community, including mana whenua, to collaboratively develop the school's vision, values, strategic direction, improvement priorities and goals related to learner learning, wellbeing, achievement, and progress.
TT18	The Board seeks to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori learners (SG8) The Board is achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students; providing for students to be taught, and to learn, in te reo Māori, and is ensuring that the policies and practices for the school reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity.



Evaluation for improvement

Evaluation, including professional inquiry, enables the creation and sharing of new knowledge and understandings about what works and makes a biggest difference for all ākonga.

Evaluation involves making a judgment about the quality, effectiveness or value of a policy, programme or practice in terms of its contribution to the desired outcomes. It involves systematically posing questions, gathering evidence, and making sense of this evidence to determine what is and is not working, for whom and under which conditions. By enabling us to describe and understand the impacts of our current practices, evaluation also highlights the implications for equity and excellence and provides a basis for determining actions for improvement.

This domain is used to determine if a school has developed an ongoing evaluation cycle to evaluate its own school practices and improve valued educational outcomes. The evaluation for improvement domain emphasises evaluation cycles at the school level - that is, how a school continually evaluates its own practices to improve. This would likely be supported and informed by multiple smaller evaluation cycles at the individual or group / syndicate level. The evaluation cycle(s) should seek to sustain and embed practices that improve valued educational outcomes and cease to use those not delivering the desired outcomes for the particular context.

The successful use of evaluation data promotes their valuing by staff as a mechanism for change and improvement (Cousins et al., 2014). The School Evaluation Indicators provide a common language to enable leaders, teachers and Boards to purposefully engage with external evaluation as an opportunity to review, validate and support their own improvement actions.

It is important that evaluation processes include learner voice and perspectives and is purposeful in collecting and listening to all voices across the school's community.

Excellent evaluation for improvement aligns with requirements under the Education and Training Act 2020, the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) and the School Evaluation Indicators – Domain 6.

