



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

Using standardised assessment to inform teaching and learning

[Find the module online here on Education LMS](#)



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

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- Standardised assessment and The New Zealand Curriculum | Te Mātaiaho
- Acting on standardised assessment
- Using SMART reports to identify potential actions.

Using standardised assessment to inform teaching and learning

Welcome to this guidance to support school leaders and teachers in using assessment, such as SMART and other standardised assessments, to inform teaching and learning.



Learning intentions

This material will support you to:

- explain the role and purpose of standardised assessment (including SMART) in teaching and learning
- take action to improve teaching and learning as a result of a standardised assessment
- use key SMART reports to locate useful information to inform teaching and learning.

By the end of this learning you have the knowledge and confidence to use standardised assessment—especially SMART—alongside classroom evidence to make clear, consistent, and curriculum-aligned decisions about student progress.

Standardised assessment in teaching and learning



Introduction to the kaupapa

Prompt questions

Take a moment to consider the following questions either on your own or with a colleague.

- What standardised assessments do you use now?
- How do you use those standardised assessments to help you sharpen your teaching?

Standardised assessments are:

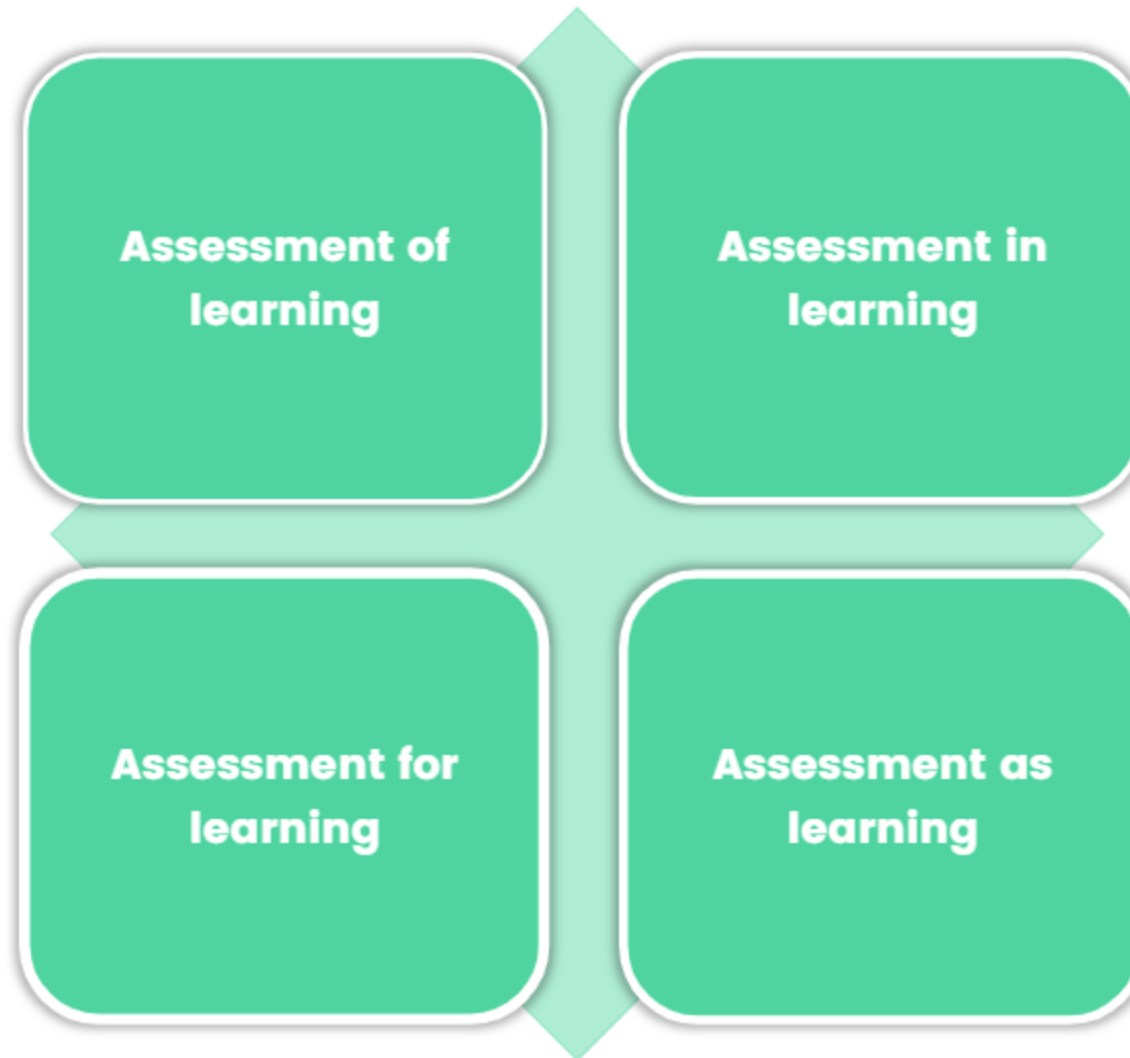
Dependable

Standardised assessments such as SMART offer a dependable way to check progress in reading, writing, and mathematics at key points during the year. Because SMART is aligned to the curriculum, it adds helpful context to other evidence, giving teachers a broader view of progress in relation to expectations.

Complementary

Standardised assessments do not replace what teachers see in their classroom—they work alongside this information, helping confirm patterns, highlight strengths, and flag areas needing further attention. They offer a stable, curriculum-linked snapshot that supports teaching and learning decisions.

How SMART and standardised assessments support assessment purposes



Assessment OF learning

Standardised assessment offers a consistent snapshot of achievement and progress.

SMART supports this purpose by:

- Providing norm-referenced, curriculum-linked measures
- Allowing teachers to track progress over time
- Informing school and system-level discussions

Assessment IN learning

During teaching, SMART helps teachers identify what to focus on next.

It does this by:

- clarifying knowledge and practices along learning progressions
- sharpening attention during observation, questioning and feedback
- encouraging purposeful checking for understanding.

Assessment FOR learning

SMART can inform future teaching and learning by:

- highlighting patterns of strength and need for individuals, classes or groups
- showing which knowledge and practices may need a return visit
- supporting decisions about grouping, targeted teaching, and programme adjustments.

Assessment AS learning

Assessment as learning involves students using assessment information to reflect on and take responsibility for their learning.

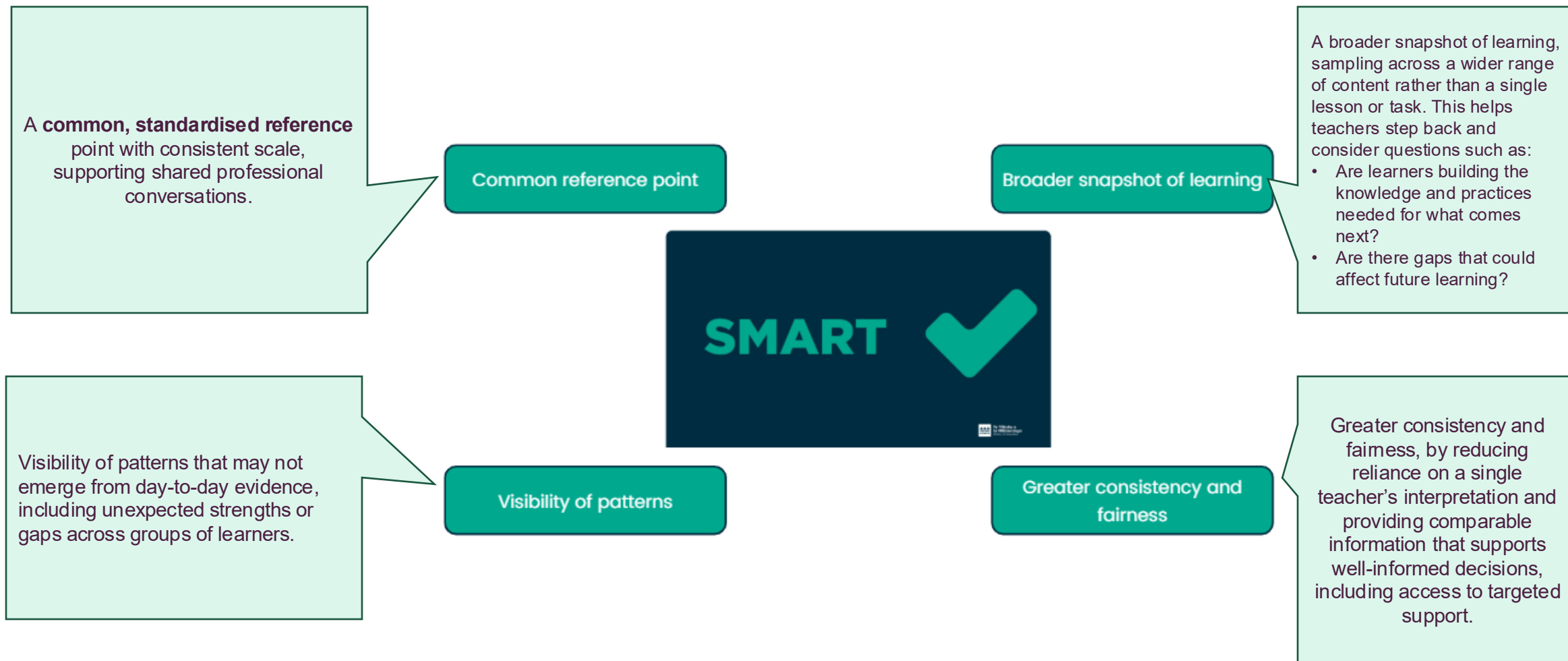
SMART contributes when teachers:

- use reports such as 'Next learning focus' for goal-setting conversations
- help students understand their strengths and next steps
- use metacognitive talk about progress and learning strategies.

What SMART can do that formative assessment can't



What SMART can do that formative assessment can't



It's not a competition!

Formative assessment supports day-to-day responsiveness.

SMART supports reflection, pattern-spotting, and strategic action.

When used together:

SMART can strengthen the *noticing, sense-making and responding*.

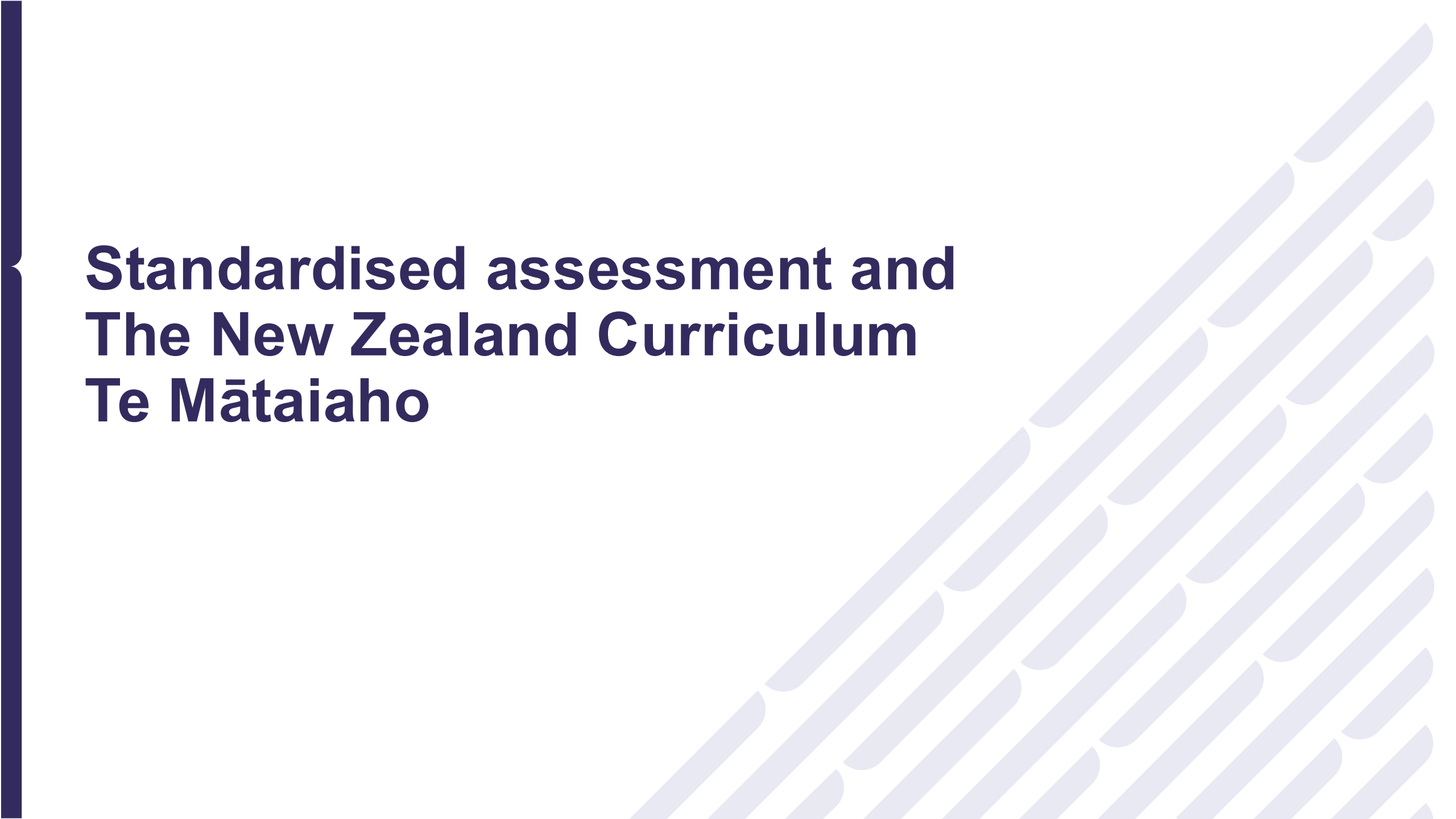
Reflect

From hunch to evidence

Identify a student, group, or class where you have a strong 'teacher hunch' about progress or learning needs.

- What does your formative assessment suggest?
- What type of information could a standardised tool like SMART provide that would help confirm or challenge your hunch?
- How might this wider snapshot influence your next teaching steps?





Standardised assessment and The New Zealand Curriculum Te Mātaiaho

Learning intentions

Identify how SMART and other standardised assessments support the implementation of assessment expectations in The New Zealand Curriculum | Te Mātaiaho.

1

explain the role and purposes of standardised assessment (including SMART) in teaching and learning

2

take action to improve teaching and learning as a result of a standardised assessment.

3

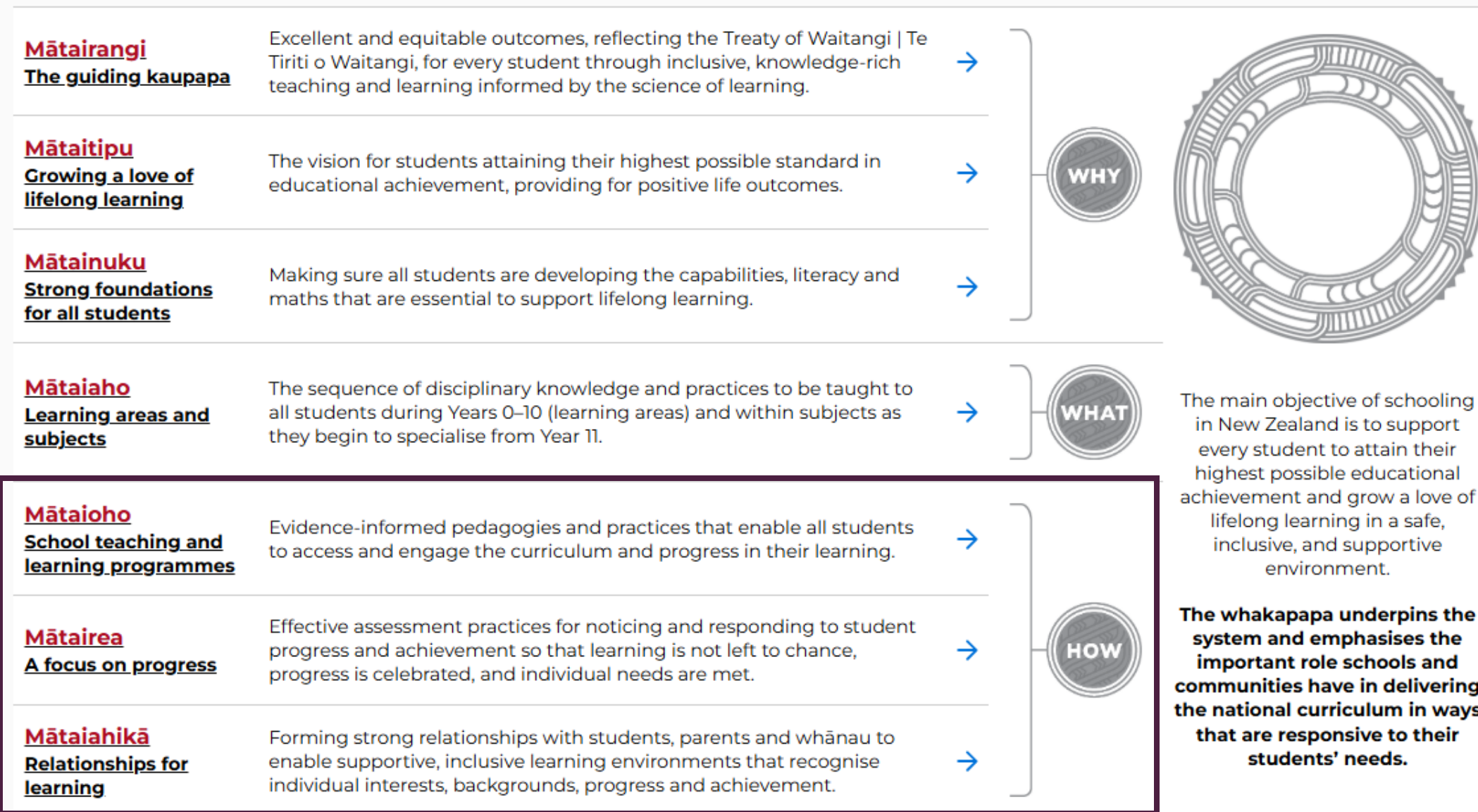
use key SMART reports to locate useful information to inform teaching and learning.

Reflection

Take a moment to consider the following questions either on your own or with a colleague.

- What role do you believe assessment should play in bringing the curriculum to life for your learners?
- How do you think assessment connects to learning design, planning, and teaching—not just reporting?

Te Mātaiaho: Contents and Whakapapa



Mātaioho: Teaching and learning programmes

Planning for coherent and effective teaching

A well-designed, comprehensive teaching and learning programme brings the curriculum to life.

Assessment is used to:

- inform instructional decisions
- identify starting points and priorities for learning
- support progress for all students.

Assessment provides evidence that helps teachers plan purposeful, connected, and responsive programmes.

Teaching with clarity and purpose

Professional judgement, informed by evidence, supports effective instruction.

Assessment helps teachers:

- pinpoint areas requiring further teaching
- adjust the pace of instruction in relation to student progress and curriculum expectations
- identify the prior learning to revisit
- connect ideas and support explicit, intentional teaching.

Assessment provides evidence that strengthens professional judgement and informs explicit teaching.

Creating a responsive learning environment

Teachers recognise and respond to students' needs and ways of learning.

Assessment supports responsiveness by:

- checking for understanding
- providing timely, targeted feedback
- informing teaching adjustments that support all learners to progress.

Mātaioho highlights how teachers bring the curriculum to life through coherent teaching and learning programmes that support student engagement. Assessment plays a central role in shaping these programmes and teaching decisions.

Mātairea: a focus on progress

Mātairea emphasises how learning develops over time and how teachers support students to move forward in coherent, connected ways.

It foregrounds the role of assessment in understanding progress and informing ongoing teaching responses.

Through this lens, assessment, including standardised tools like SMART, becomes a critical tool for making progress visible and actionable for both teachers and learners.

As teachers notice patterns of progress and respond to student learning, an important question emerges: *Why do some teaching and assessment approaches support learning more effectively than others?*



The science of learning and assessment

The science of learning helps answer the question: Why do some teaching and assessment approaches support learning more effectively than others?

The science of learning shows how assessment, explicit teaching, and well-sequenced knowledge work together to strengthen learning over time.

Te Mātaiaho explains that our knowledge-rich curriculum is underpinned by the science of learning.

This science informs teaching practice by helping teachers understand the key characteristics of how people learn.

The science of learning and assessment

The science of learning helps explain **how students acquire, organise, and retain knowledge over time**. It draws on a growing body of research about memory, attention, practice, and feedback, and provides important insights into why some teaching and assessment approaches are more effective than others.



Learning is cumulative



At the heart of this research is a clear message: **learning is cumulative**. New learning is most successful when it builds deliberately on well-organised prior knowledge, is explicitly taught, and is revisited through opportunities to retrieve and apply learning in different contexts.

Assessment plays a critical role in this process by helping teachers understand what students already know, what they are ready to learn next, and how well learning is being retained over time.

High-quality assessment practices

High-quality assessment practices support the science of learning by:

- identifying accurate entry points for new learning
- revealing gaps or misconceptions before they compound
- informing explicit teaching and carefully sequenced instruction
- creating opportunities for retrieval practice that strengthens memory
- supporting timely feedback that moves learning forward.

Reflect

Think of a recent teaching and learning sequence that you have undertaken in the last few weeks and answer these questions:

- Where did assessment inform the decisions you made during the teaching and learning? e.g. prior knowledge and retrieval, the sequence of the learning, explicit teaching
- How did you identify the next steps for learning?
- What did you do where misconceptions emerged, and what assessment practices supported responsiveness?



Assessment in *Te Mātaiaho* is an essential part of the *how* of teaching, helping teachers make student engagement, progress, and learning needs visible. It strengthens professional judgement by informing purposeful, coherent, and responsive teaching that aligns with the science of learning.

Next steps and actions

With your team, review how your school assessment schedule supports the assessment requirements in Te Mātaiaho using the following prompts:

Purpose and value

How does our use of standardised assessment support understanding of student progress and complement classroom assessment?

Timing and use

How will the timing of our standardised assessments enable us to use the information meaningfully to inform retrieval, sequencing, and explicit teaching? For example, Term 4 assessments can inform what happens at the beginning of the following year.

Capability and impact

What changes to teaching will we make as a result of our data, and what further learning do we need to use assessment information more effectively?

Acting on standardised assessment

Learning intentions

Take action to improve teaching and learning using standardised assessment information.

1

explain the role and purposes of standardised assessment (including SMART) in teaching and learning

2

take action to improve teaching and learning as a result of a standardised assessment.

3

use key SMART reports to locate useful information to inform teaching and learning.

Reflect

Think about this question:

When standardised assessment results arrive, what usually happens next in my classroom?



SMART assessments give us valuable information — but learning improves only when that information changes what we do as teachers.

SMART is a standardised, point-in-time assessment. It provides a snapshot of aspects of student learning that can help teachers notice patterns and trends.

SMART is useful for:	SMART does not:
evaluating the impact of current teaching on the skills and progress of all students.	explain <i>why</i> a learner is struggling or succeeding
identifying patterns of strength and need across a class or group	show learning strategies, misconceptions, or engagement
noticing learners who may not be on track to meet year-level expectations.	replace teacher professional judgement informed by a variety of evidence
confirming or questioning classroom assessments	provide enough information on its own to decide next steps
supporting professional conversations and moderation.	

SMART and identifying learners with additional needs

SMART can contribute to the early identification of learners who may require additional support. It can help teachers notice students who:

- are not progressing as expected over time
- show persistent gaps in essential knowledge or foundational skills
- perform in ways that do not align with classroom-based evidence
- may require closer monitoring, scaffolded teaching, or further investigation.

SMART prompts teachers to gather more evidence about additional learning needs — including classroom observations, student work, kōrero with the learner and whānau, and specialist input where needed — to understand what support will make learning accessible and successful.

When used alongside other information, SMART can help ensure that decisions about additional support are fair, timely, and based on a broad evidence picture.

SMART gives us
information.

**Teachers turn that
information into
action.**

Taking action through a *Te Mātaiaho* lens

Te Mātaiaho positions learning as knowledge-rich, sequenced and cumulative, and designed to prepare learners for what comes next.

From this perspective, assessment matters because it helps us check:

- Have learners secured the essential knowledge?
- Are they ready to engage with the next part of the sequence?
- Does teaching need to be adjusted, slowed, or revisited?



The New Zealand Curriculum

Te Mātaiaho

Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

*Mātai aho tāhūnui,
Mātai aho tāhūroa, Hei
takapau wānanga E
hora nei.*

*Lay the kaupapa down
And sustain it, The
learning here Laid out
before us.*

Adaptive teaching

If SMART data suggests learners are not yet secure, effective responses might include:

- revisiting foundational knowledge
- adjusting the pace or sequence of teaching
- making learning more explicit and scaffolded.

This is not about “adding more” — it’s about adaptive teaching.

What does ‘taking action’ actually mean?

Taking action means changing what happens in the classroom.
After analysing SMART data, effective teaching actions may include:

Grouping or intervention is not the action — the teaching that happens within it is.

Adjusting teaching focus

- Re-teaching specific concepts or skills.
- Spending longer on key ideas before moving on.
- Making learning intentions and success criteria more specific or targeted.
- Explicitly connecting new learning to prior knowledge.

Using grouping intentionally

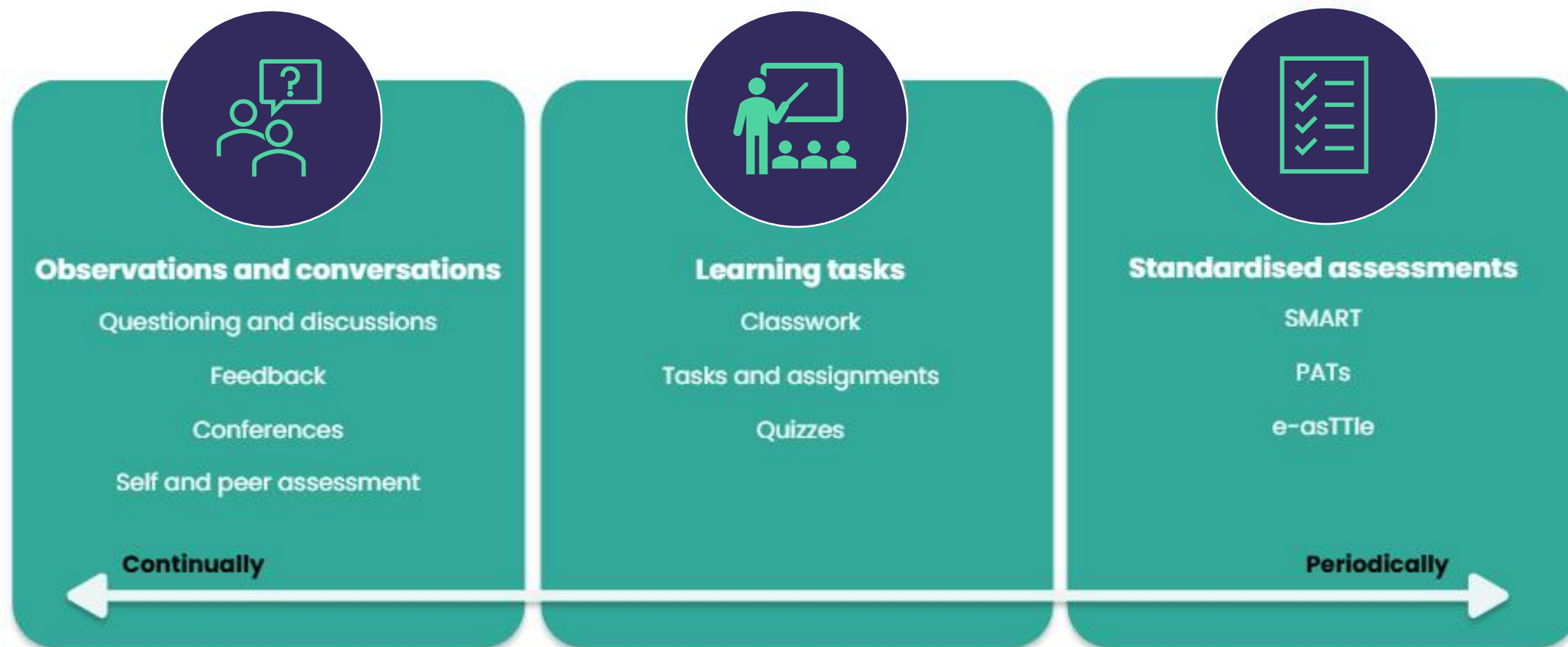
- Creating short-term, flexible groups based on specific needs.
- Regrouping for targeted instruction, including accelerative practices and enrichment.
- Reviewing and adjusting groups as new evidence emerges.
- Avoiding permanent or fixed “ability” groups.

Choosing responsive strategies

- Increasing modelling and worked examples.
- Providing additional guided practice before moving to independent tasks.
- Asking students to explain their thinking.
- Checking for understanding more frequently.

SMART is one important piece of the evidence bundle

SMART should always be considered alongside other evidence..



Building a comprehensive picture of learning

Draw on:

- classroom observations and conversations
- students' work samples and tasks
- standardised assessments

This process, known as triangulation, helps ensure your decisions are fair, reliable and responsive to your learners.

Ask yourself: Does this SMART data match what I see in everyday learning? If not, why might that be?

Classroom example: Turning SMART data into teaching action

After reviewing SMART results, a teacher notices that a group of students has not yet demonstrated understanding of a key foundational concept that underpins the current mathematics unit.

Instead of moving on as planned, the teacher adjusts the teaching sequence. They revisit the concept using explicit modelling and guided practice, then provide additional opportunities for students to explain their thinking.

Students who have already demonstrated secure understanding are given opportunities to apply the concept in more complex problem-solving tasks, while the teacher focuses targeted teaching on those who need consolidation.

This example shows that “taking action” means:

- changing what is taught, how it is taught, or the sequence of learning
- using grouping flexibly and temporarily
- focusing on teaching moves, not just organisational changes.

Reflect

Using the “What does taking action actually mean?” section, identify **one concrete teaching action** you could take in the next two weeks.

Choose a teaching practices from one of these areas:

- **Adjusting teaching focus** (re-teaching, clarifying intentions)
- **Using grouping intentionally** (short-term, flexible groups)
- **Responsive strategies** (modelling, guided practice, checking for understanding)

Prompt:

Which action would have the biggest impact for my learners right now?

Write your chosen action as a **SMART/Te Mātaiaho aligned commitment**, e.g.:

- “I will revisit place value with these students (identified) using explicit modelling for three lessons before moving on.”
- “I will adjust next week’s sequence because SMART showed gaps in foundational decoding skills.”



Next steps and actions

SMART information on Tāhūrangi

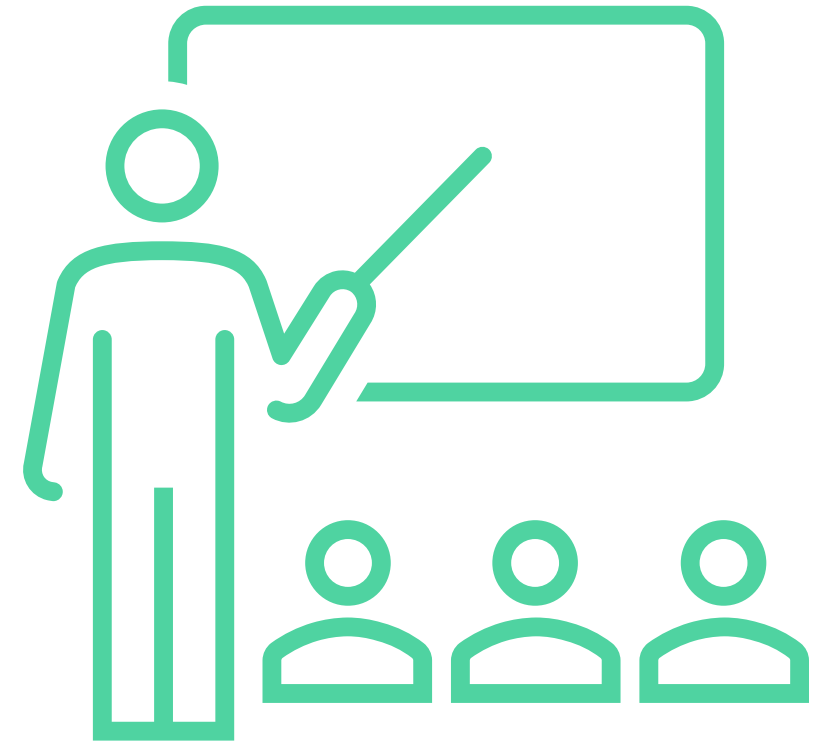
Familiarise yourself with the SMART webpages on Tāhūrangi.

[SMART - Overview and access](#)

Familiarisation site

Go to the Familiarisation site and check out examples of the SMART assessment and the tool's features.

[Familiarisation tool](#)



Using SMART reports to identify potential actions



Learning intentions

Use a SMART report to locate useful information to inform teaching and learning.

1

explain the role and purposes of standardised assessment (including SMART) in teaching and learning

2

take action to improve teaching and learning as a result of a standardised assessment.

3

use key SMART reports to locate useful information to inform teaching and learning.

Think about the standardised assessment information you have been using:

- What opportunities exist to discuss the reports that are available from your tools?
- How confident are you in knowing what the reports tell you about the **progress and achievement of your learners**?
- How often do you discuss as a team what the information tells you about **your teaching**?



SMART provides detailed information

Guttman Report

The **Guttman** Report provides insights into learning and progress at an individual student and class level.

The report shows which questions students answered correctly and gives you a sense of their strengths and gaps.

Scaled-score reports*

Schools receive a range of reports that provide a score for each student alongside a progress descriptor, and reports that show demonstrated practices, next learning focus and gaps where a student might need more support.

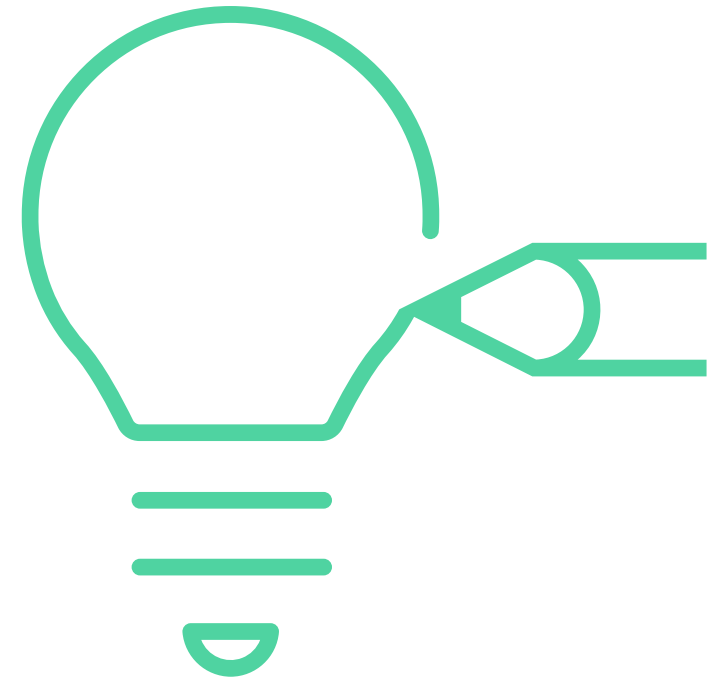
*Please note: For Assessment Window 1 in 2026, schools received an interim Guttman report immediately. The second set of detailed reports was made available after scaling, equating, and standard setting took place. This process is a necessary part of establishing a new assessment tool.

Detailed scaled-score reports were provided to schools for Reading and Maths assessments. Writing reports included a raw score and provided a view of how well students did in relation to writing a persuasive extended text, and closed writing questions.

Recognising – sense-making

When your reports have been produced, ask yourself these questions:

1. What insights does this report give you about your classroom programme? For example, what might patterns of many students getting particular items right or wrong suggest about your teaching?
2. How could information about item difficulty help you strengthen your teaching? Which students might need support with foundational concepts, and who might be ready for enrichment?
3. What might unusual response patterns reveal about individual students' learning? Could they indicate particular strengths or possible gaps?



Self-reflection

Consider your school's current school-wide reporting systems:

- Consider the standardised assessment information you are using for mid-year reporting of progress and achievement (SMART, PAT, e-asTTle, Phonics Check)
- Is there time scheduled to learn more about the progress and achievement of your learners as team?
- Can you use the reports to answer: What is the data telling me about the learning of my students?
- Can you use the reports to answer: What is the assessment information telling me about my teaching?
- What do I need to do to be able to get the best from the information these reports offer?



Next steps and actions

In the next slides, read about these three actions to build confidence in reading SMART/PAT/e-asTTle reports and using the information to understand learner progress and next steps for teaching.



**Set up time to
explore reports
together**



**Compare report data
with what you
already know**



**Identify any unusual
response patterns**

Set up time to explore reports together



- Schedule a short team meeting (20–30 min) to look at the Immediate reports you already have.
- Bring one student or class report each and discuss:
 - What do we notice?
 - Where are the clear strengths?
 - Where are the gaps?



Compare report data with what you already know



- Cross-check your SMART/PAT/e-asTTle results with:
 - classroom observations
 - student workbooks
 - recent tasks or writing samples
- Ask: Does the standardised data confirm or challenge what I thought?



Identify any unusual response patterns



- Look at students who:
 - answered very easy items incorrectly
 - succeeded on difficult items unexpectedly
- Note which students may need:
 - reteaching of foundation concepts
 - enrichment
 - further diagnostic checks



You have now explored how standardised assessment — particularly SMART — supports understanding of progress, strengthens professional judgement, and informs deliberate teaching action.

As you move forward, the focus shifts from understanding and interpreting information to using it consistently and confidently over time, alongside other assessment evidence, to support sustained learner progress.