



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

Standardised assessment to inform school-wide improvement

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



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

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Standardised assessment to inform school-wide improvement

Welcome to this guidance to support school leaders and leaders of assessment to use SMART and other standardised assessments for school-wide planning, development and reporting.

SMART sits within a wider evidence base of assessment information and supports strategic planning and coherence across the school, as well as meaningful communication with boards, parents and whānau, and the wider community.

Learning intentions

Learning intentions

In this module you will learn how to use SMART and/or other standardised assessment information for:

1

strategic planning and review, including goal and target setting, and resource management

2

evaluating programme effectiveness, and monitoring intervention and enrichment (early identification)

3

school wide reporting to boards, and the wider community

4

clear and timely reporting to parents and whānau.

Introduction

Effective school-wide planning begins with The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC).

The NZC establishes what all learners are expected to know and do, and provides the foundation for monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of teaching across the school.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Te Mātaiaho

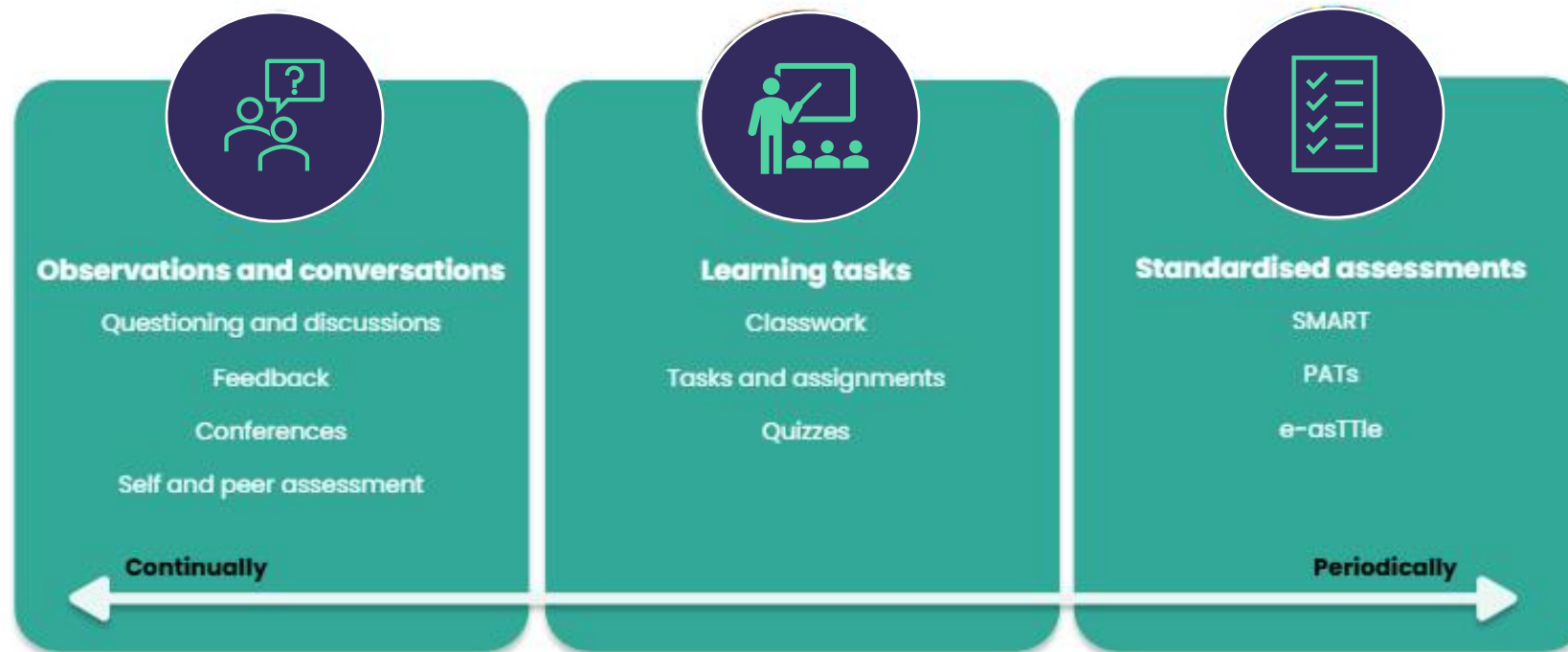
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*Mātai aho tāhūnui,
Mātai aho tāhūroa, Hei
takapau wānanga E
hora nei.*

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

Assessment for improvement

Assessment is an essential component of quality teaching and learning, sitting within the curriculum framework. A balanced assessment ecosystem includes day-to-day observations, classroom tasks, student work samples, and standardised assessments.



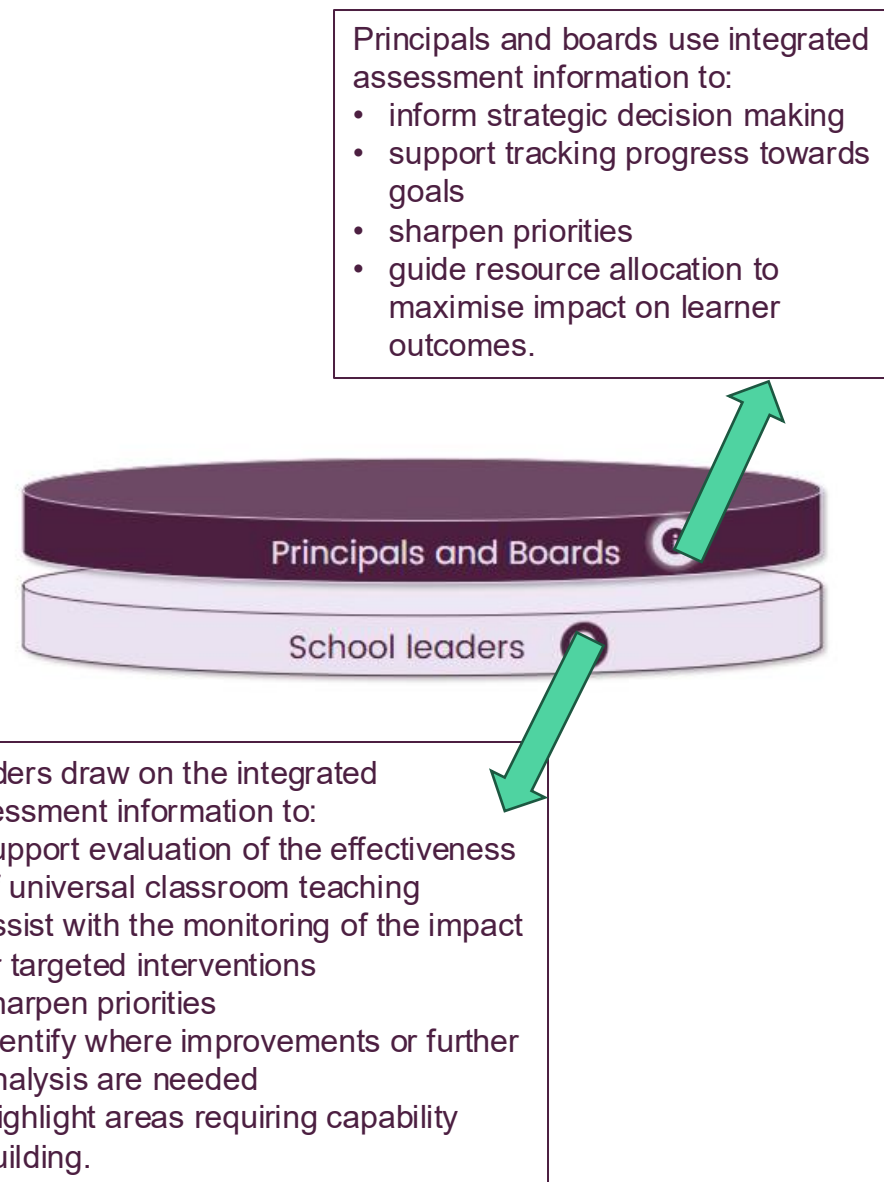
Assessment for improvement

Together, these build a comprehensive picture of learner progress and the effectiveness of teaching and learning programmes.

Within this ecosystem, standardised assessments such as SMART, e-asTTle, PAT, and the Phonics Check provide reliable checkpoints against curriculum expectations. They offer comparable information that supports leaders to see patterns across classes, cohorts, and time.

The integrated assessment information informs decision-making at the board and school leadership levels.

Ultimately, this information informs strategic decision-making. Principals and boards use these data insights to monitor progress toward goals and targets, determine priorities, and allocate resources where they will make the greatest difference.



Strategic planning and school review



Learning intention

Understand how assessment data, including SMART, informs strategic planning and review, with a focus on goal and target setting and resource management.

1

strategic planning and review, including goal and target setting, and resource management

2

evaluating programme effectiveness, and monitoring intervention and enrichment (early identification)

3

school wide reporting to boards, and the wider community

4

clear and timely reporting to parents and whānau.

Prompt questions

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

- How does your school currently use assessment information to shape strategic planning?
- Which data sources are drawn on most when setting goals and targets?
- How does assessment information meaningfully influence resourcing decisions?



School Planning and Reporting Framework

The School Planning and Reporting Framework (Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi)

requires schools to have a strategic plan that includes annual goals and targets, and an associated annual implementation plan.

The goals and targets set in the annual plan must be informed by good quality assessment information.

[Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | The school planning and reporting framework](#)

Good quality assessment information

As a result of the analysis and interpretation of SMART and other assessment data, goals and more specific targets can be set that are:

- informed by a range of evidence
- based on patterns, not single data points
- specific to cohorts, curriculum areas, and learner groups
- accompanied by planned actions and resourcing

Schools are also required to use good quality evidence to monitor whether programmes, PLD and interventions improve learner outcomes.

Strategic resourcing

Guided by evidence informed goals and targets, leaders and boards can prioritise resources strategically – including staffing, professional learning and materials or targeted programmes.

Assessment information helps leaders make these decisions by showing:

- where acceleration is needed
- the scale and type of intervention required
- where additional teaching time or specialist support may be required
- where to focus professional learning and development (PLD)
- which tools or programmes may need investment or review.

How SMART contributes to target setting

SMART is one data source — and it should always be used alongside classroom evidence, other checks, progress markers, and conversations. The information from SMART provides consistent mid- and end-year checkpoints to show progress across cohorts or learner groups.

SMART offers:

- clear, curriculum-aligned indicators for reading, writing, maths
- cohort and school-wide summary views showing patterns over time
- identification of at-risk students and curriculum areas requiring attention
- evidence for evaluating the impact of interventions or programmes.

Align targets, resourcing, and teaching action with evidence.

Reflect on your school's current strategic planning and review, goal and target setting, and resource management:

- How effectively are you using insights from standardised assessments to inform decision-making, allocate resources, and evaluate the impact of targeted programmes?
- Consider what learning your team needs to use SMART data knowledgeably and confidently to understand progress and achievement, and identify learners who need additional support or extension.
- How do you know if resourcing decisions are having an impact?
- Where is assessment information potentially underused in strategic planning or review?

Leadership reflection tool (rate 1 – 5)

Use the tool below to rate your level of confidence in each of the following aspects of your current practice, from 1 (no confidence) through to 5 (high confidence).

	1	2	3	4	5
Evidence quality (reliable, valid, moderated)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Alignment of goals/targets with actual data	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SMART and other standardised tool data integration (appropriate weighting, not over- or under-used)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Resourcing decisions aligned with identified needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Next steps and actions

Based on your reflections, what improvements do you want to explore in your context? Here are three possibilities:

Strengthen systems

Create an assessment and reporting schedule that aligns collection, analysis, and planning cycles.

Strengthen strategic planning

- Use SMART patterns + classroom evidence to draft or define annual targets.
- Build annual review meetings around triangulated evidence rather than isolated results.

Strengthen resource management

- Align resourcing decisions with needs informed by SMART.
- Review PLD and intervention programmes using SMART + classroom evidence to evaluate impact.



Using standardised assessment information to monitor and evaluate

Learning intention

Use assessment information, including SMART data, to evaluate programme effectiveness and monitor targeted and tailored support for diverse needs.



Prompt questions

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

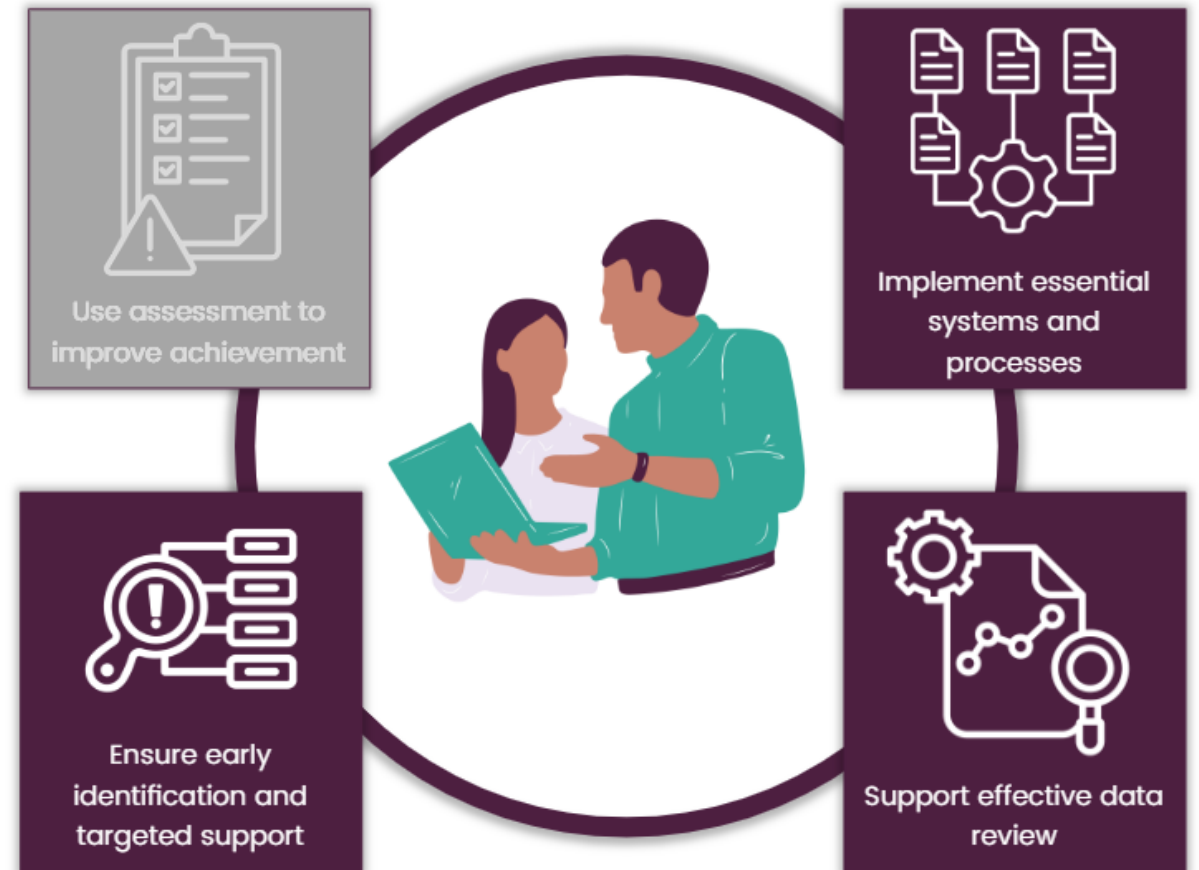
- How do we know the teaching across the school is having a positive impact on progress and achievement of our learners?
- How do we know if classroom programmes need to be changed in any way?
- How early can we detect when learners need additional support or extension?
- How do we currently know whether universal classroom teaching, targeted teaching or interventions are working?
- What evidence helps us decide whether to continue, adapt, or stop an intervention?



Keeping progress and achievement at the centre

A key leadership responsibility is to keep student progress and achievement at the centre of the school's daily work. The collection, analysis, and interpretation of assessment information from a range of sources is used to understand student needs and guide improvement aligned with curriculum expectations and school goals.

Read more about how each of these leadership practices helps build school capability to improve student progress and achievement in the following slides.



Use assessment to improve achievement



Use assessment to improve achievement

Assessment helps leaders plan so every student has the best chance of success. By analysing curriculum and assessment information, leaders identify:

- what students need to know and do
- what teachers need to know and do to support their students to succeed

Leaders also use evidence to allocate resources in priority areas, ensuring students and teachers can access the support they need to engage in year-level learning.

A range of assessment information, including standardised tools such as SMART, is used to identify patterns and trends for individual students, cohorts, and the school as a whole.

Select this icon to return to
the home page



Implement essential systems and processes



Implement essential systems and processes

To support the effective gathering and analysis of curriculum and assessment information leaders ensure systems are in place to:

- monitor progress for all learners
- identify students at risk of not achieving
- track progress once supports are introduced
- evaluate the impact of those supports.

Select this icon to return to
the home page



Ensure early identification and targeted support



Ensure early identification and targeted support

Identify students who need extra support early, and provide targeted or tailored interventions to accelerate their progress.

Leading regular conversations about progress and achievement at school and team levels helps build collective responsibility and supports early identification of learners who may require acceleration.

Ongoing review and analysis enable leaders to pinpoint students who need intentional planning and ensure their progress continues over time.

Select the button below to visit the Accelerating progress – Leadership guidance on Tāhūrangi for further information.

Accelerating progress –
Leadership guidance

Select this icon to return to
the home page



Link:
[Accelerating progress –
Leadership guidance](#)

Support effective data review



Support effective data review

Leaders can strengthen review and analysis processes by:

- ensuring a range of high-quality assessment information is available for decision-making
- embedding regular data reviews (termly, 6–8 weekly, end-of-unit, daily/weekly)
- dedicating time for collaborative data analysis
- supporting other school leaders and teachers with coaching on data review and analysis processes.

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the home page



How SMART contributes to keeping progress and achievement at the centre

SMART contributes to early identification by showing:

- students not on track relative to year level curriculum expectations
- groups with common gaps or strengths
- learners who may require acceleration, targeted support, or enrichment.

Early identification comes from a variety of sources and assessment events play an important role in identification and confirmation of students' learning needs.

SMART is just one part of the picture

Evaluations must also include:

- classroom learning tasks
- student work samples
- other planned assessment tasks
- teacher observations of difficulties and strengths
- student voice and conversations
- parents and whānau voice and conversations
- moderation and review discussions.

Using a wide range of evidence from classroom practice, alongside SMART and other standardised assessments, helps prevent over-reliance on a single data point.

It also ensures that teachers can act quickly when progress is not as expected.

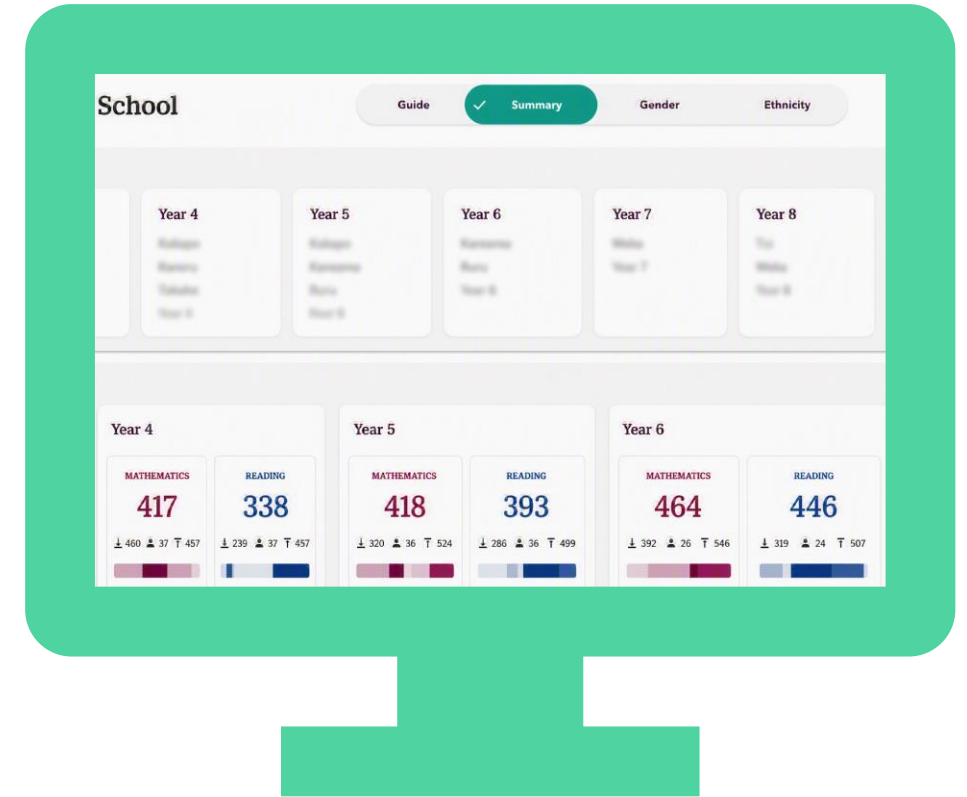
The use of SMART alongside other effective assessment practices also enables school leaders to:

- identify student's needs
- inform the school board
- lead data conversations.



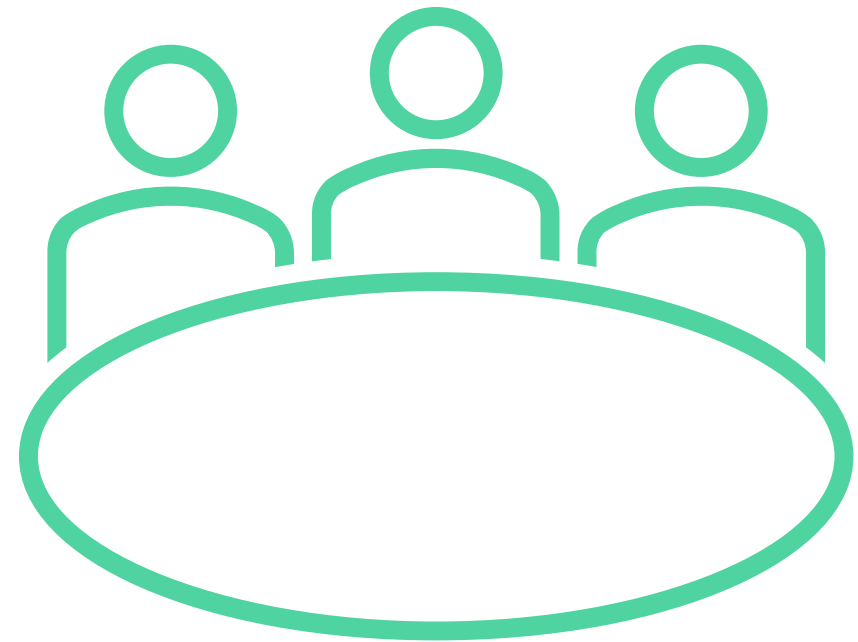
Identify student needs

- Analysing assessment information which shows students are meeting expectations and which need further investigation.
- This enables a school to plan effectively, monitor progress and make adjustments where necessary.



Inform the school board

- School-wide assessment, including SMART information, informs the school board about the effectiveness of universal teaching and learning programmes, acceleration initiatives and progress towards strategic goals.
- Leaders can support their boards to purposefully interrogate assessment data to deepen their understanding of patterns and trends. This leads to more informed resourcing decisions.



Lead data conversations

By analysing and interpreting school-wide assessment information, leaders can facilitate data conversations that provide insights into progress and achievement across the school.

Effective evaluation focuses on patterns over time, rather than single data points, and helps leaders understand the relationship between student learning and teaching practice, and identify supports for teachers.

For example they can identify:

- patterns in progress, such as year groups needing support or strengths to scale
- trends across terms and year level groups
- impacts of changes to teaching practices and effectiveness of tiered interventions
- resourcing and targeted PLD needs

Self-review

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

- Do we evaluate programmes using multiple evidence sources?
- Are interventions continued because they work, or because they are expected?
- How early do we identify and put in place initiatives for learners needing support or extension?
- How do we know whether targeted teaching has made a difference?



Trace the 'evidence'

Select a recent example of:

- a targeted teaching group
- an intervention programme
- a group identified for extension
- a cohort where a specific need was identified.
- Trace the evidence by working through the following steps:

Step 1

Identification



How did you first notice this group?

What evidence supported that initial identification?

Planning



What information did you use to design the targeted or tailored support?

Did SMART or any other standardised data contribute to this understanding? If so, how? If not, why?

Monitoring



What assessment information did you use to monitor progress, and how did you check progress over time?

Evaluation



How did you decide if the programme or support was effective?

What evidence showed change, progress, or lack of progress?

What did you do next? Continue, adjust, stop?

Summary

Summarise what evidence was most valuable and where there were gaps.

Using standardised assessment for school-wide reporting

Learning intention

Use SMART and/or other standardised assessment information for school-wide reporting to boards and the wider community.



Activity

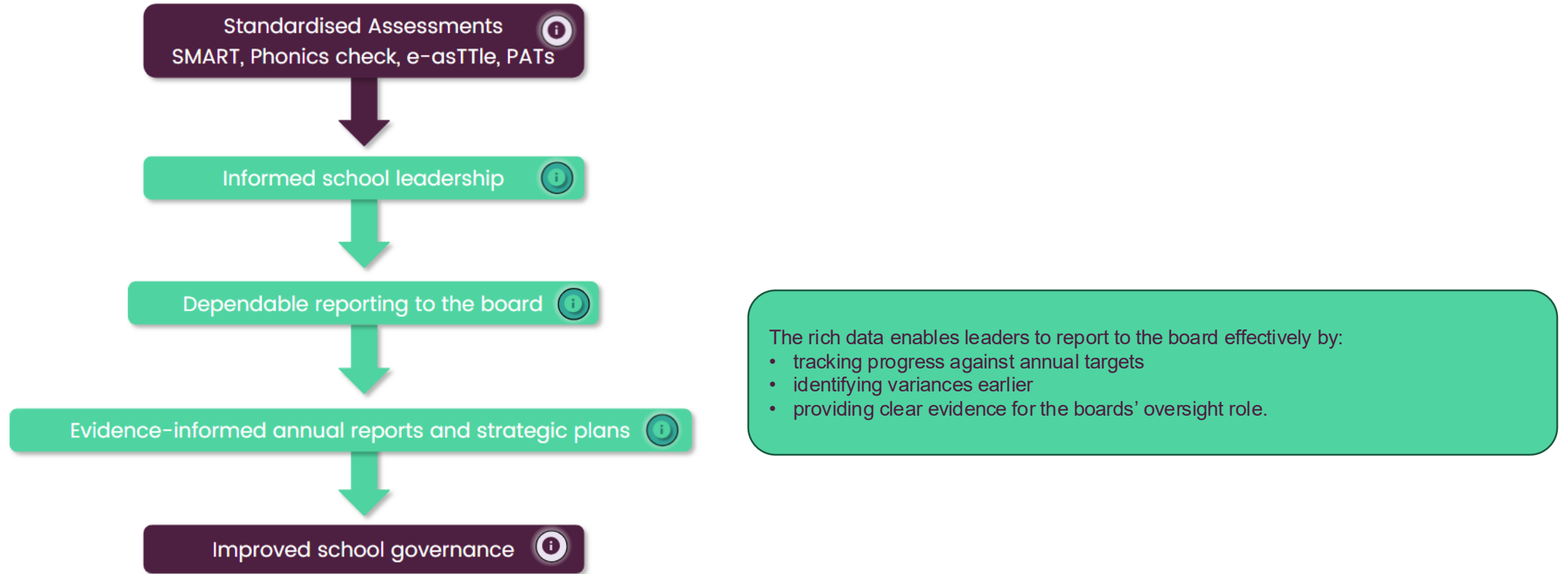
How data 'flows' into leadership decisions:



Consider:

- Which parts of this 'flow' do you think are strong in your context? What evidence supports your thinking?
- Which parts do you think are unclear or could be refined? What evidence supports your thinking?

How SMART contributes to school-wide reporting



Read the following slides to learn how SMART can strengthen school-wide reporting and, subsequently, improve governance.

The reporting chain

SMART and other standardised assessments such as phonics check, e-asTTle and PATs provide evidence of progress and achievement.

Informed school leadership

SMART and other standardised assessments, alongside other evidence, help build a clear picture of learning across the school.

Leaders will get:

- reliable data at both student and cohort levels
- information aligned to curriculum expectations
- insights into patterns, needs, strengths, and emerging issues
- consistent, twice-yearly data points for monitoring trends over time..

Dependable reporting to the board

The rich data enables leaders to report to the board effectively by:

- tracking progress against annual targets
- identifying variances earlier
- providing clear evidence for the boards' oversight role.

Evidence-informed annual reports and strategic plans

Reliable assessment information helps principals and board meet the requirements of the Planning and Reporting Framework | Te Whakangā Ngātahi, which includes:

- completion of an annual report that evaluates school-wide progress and achievement
- inclusion of a statement of variance, comparing planned outcomes with actual results in the annual report
- use of the annual report to guide and inform both the strategic plan and the annual implementation plan
- reflection of community consultation and student achievement priorities in the plans.

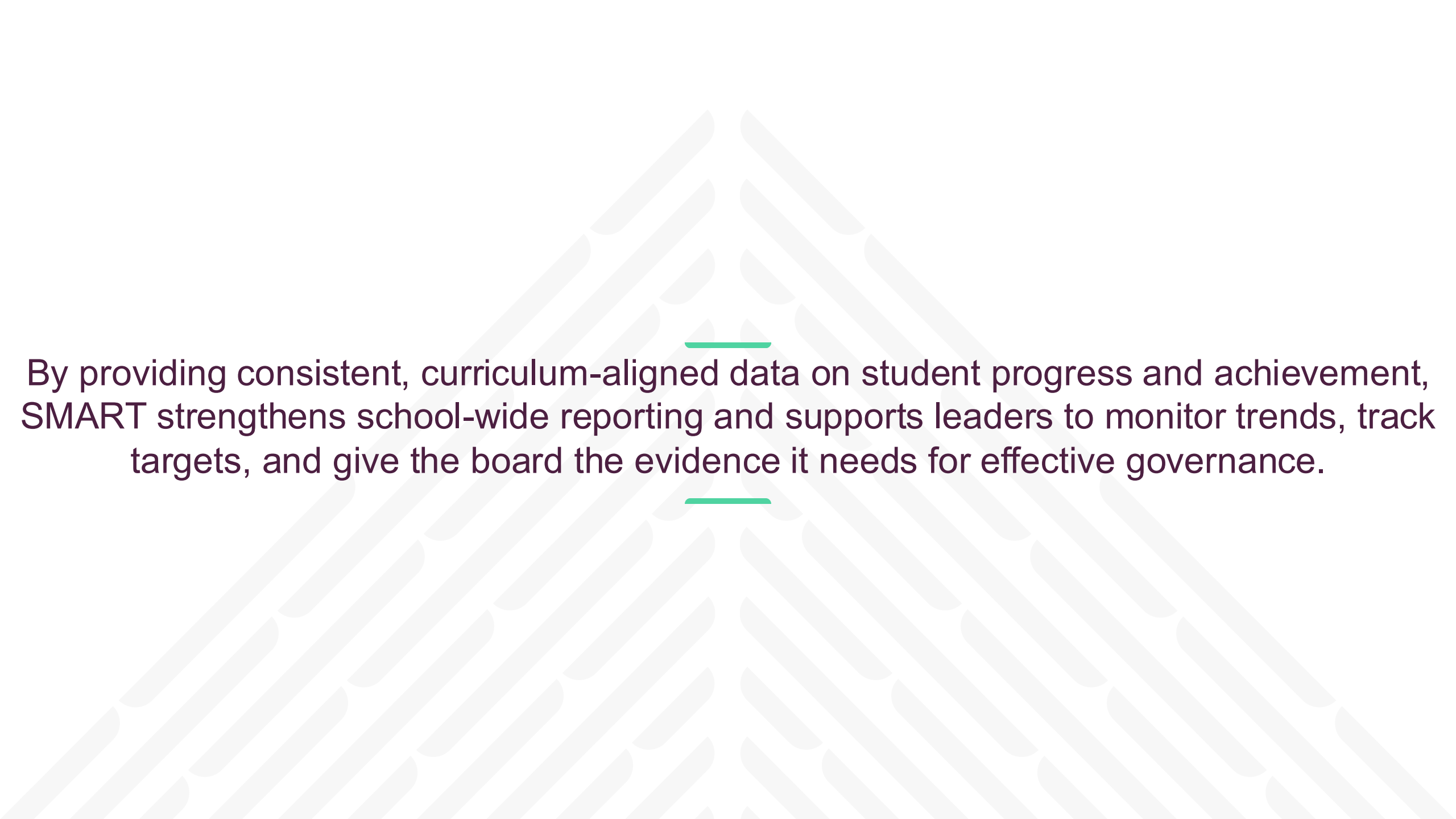
Link: [Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | The school planning and reporting framework](#)

Improved school governance

When assessment information is gathered in a consistent way across the school, leaders can give the board the information it needs to:

- track progress toward strategic and annual goals
- identify patterns and trends for different groups of learners
- check how well the school is supporting all students.

This consistent data gives boards a strong foundation for making informed decisions and carrying out effective governance.



By providing consistent, curriculum-aligned data on student progress and achievement, SMART strengthens school-wide reporting and supports leaders to monitor trends, track targets, and give the board the evidence it needs for effective governance.

Reflection

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

- How well are we using aggregated, school-wide assessment information to monitor progress and achievement across the school?
- In what ways does our use of standardised assessment evidence strengthen our reporting to the board?



Next steps and actions

Here are two actionable improvements you could consider:



Decide when and how SMART will contribute to school-wide reporting.



Consider what learning your team will need to use SMART data knowledgeably and confidently with your board.



**The school-wide perspective on
clear and timely reporting to parents
and whānau**

Learning intention

Use SMART and other standardised assessment information to communicate progress clearly and meaningfully to parents and whānau.

- 1 strategic planning and review, including goal and target setting, and resource management
- 2 evaluating programme effectiveness, and monitoring intervention and enrichment (early identification)
- 3 school wide reporting to boards, and the wider community
- 4 clear and timely reporting to parents and whānau.

Reviewing current practice

Look closely at your current reports that are shared with parents and whānau.

- How clearly do they report the progress and achievement of the student in reading, writing and mathematics?
- What works well for parents and whānau? How do you know?
- What causes confusion or inconsistency? How do you know?

Reporting on progress and achievement of students

Standardised assessment data provides a consistent and reliable evidence base that supports reporting at every level of the school — from individual learner progress to whole-school achievement trends.

Schools are required to report to parents and whānau with clear and timely information aligning with these current regulations:

From Education (School Boards) Regulations 2020, regulation 21:

Duty to report on progress and achievement of students.

1. The board of a school, together with the school's principal and teaching staff, must use good quality assessment or aromatawai information to report to each student at the school and their parents on the student's progress and achievement.
2. The reports must-
 - a. be written in plain language; and
 - b. include the student's progress and achievement-
 - i. across any relevant foundation curriculum policy statements and national curriculum statements made under section 90 of the Act; and
 - ii. in literacy and mathematics or te reo matatini and pāngarau, and
 - c. be provided at least twice per year.
3. In this regulation, good quality, in relation to assessment or aromatawai information, means that the information draws on a range of evidence to evaluate the progress and achievement of each student and build a comprehensive picture of that student's learning.

(Reporting to Parents and Whānau Years 0-10 Guidance for teachers, p. 11)

Link: [Reporting to parents and whānau](#)

Communicating progress and achievement to parents and whānau

Every student should feel successful in their learning and confident in their progress.

High-quality reporting helps support this by giving parents and whānau clear, timely, and meaningful information about:

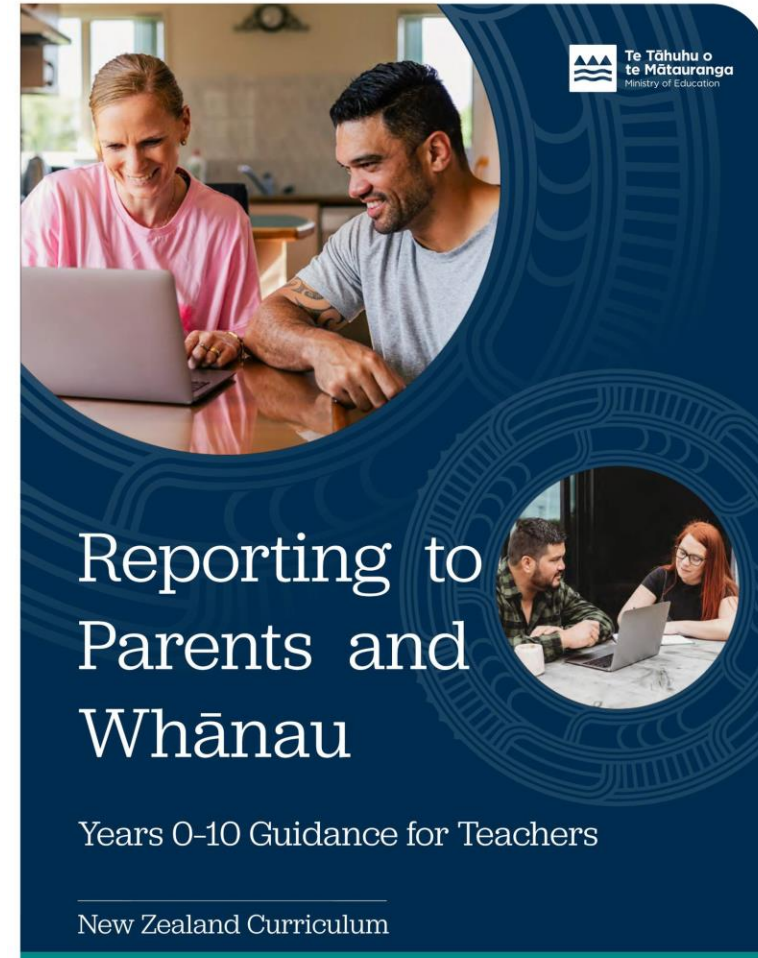
- achievement and progress against the curriculum
- areas of strength and improvement
- next steps in learning.

Communicating progress and achievement to parents and whānau

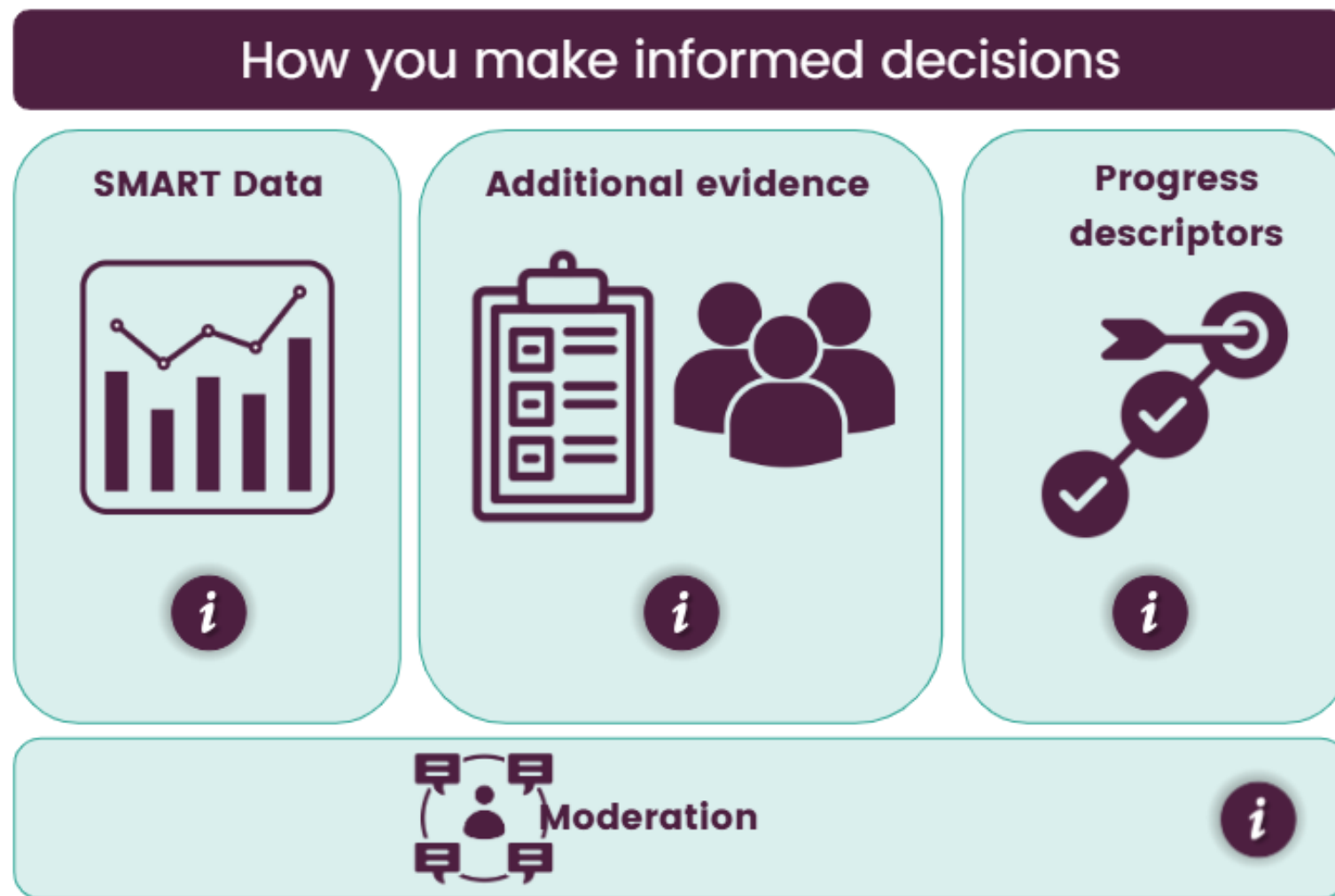
The Reporting to Parents and Whānau Years 0-10 Guidance for Teachers states that high quality reporting requires triangulating a range of evidence such as:

- observations and conversations
- learning tasks
- assessment results from specific assessments, such as the Phonics Check or the twice-yearly assessment for Years 3-8, i.e., SMART, e-asTTle, PATs.

Link: [Reporting to parents and whānau](#) on Tāhūrangi



How do you make informed decisions



How do you make informed decisions

How you make informed decisions

Contributes to a learner's achievement story by providing a point in time snapshot of progress

SMART Data



Additional evidence



Progress descriptors



With this range of evidence, teachers can then select accurate Progress Descriptors for reporting against year-level curriculum expectations.

Multiple sources of assessment information should complement SMART to show the richness of the classroom processes such as:

- strategy use
- collaboration
- developmental growth.



Moderation

That evidence needs to be moderated to ensure judgements are dependable.

2026 Reporting components

From 2026, all reports to parents and whānau are expected to include the following five common components:

Progress descriptors

The five Progress Descriptors: Emerging, Developing, Consolidating, Proficient and Exceeding, provide parents and whānau with clear and consistent language that reports a student's progress in relation to year level expectations for reading, writing, and maths.

Visual representation

A visual representation of the students' progress over time.

Progress narrative

A narrative about how progress descriptors were selected, and information for parents and whānau about how they can support next learning steps.

Assessment results

Assessment results from specific assessments such as the Phonics Check or twice yearly assessments for Years 3-8 i.e. SMART, e-asTTle, PATs.

You need to include assessment results from specific assessments, such as the Phonics Check or the twice-yearly assessments for Years 3–8 (e.g., SMART, e-asTTle, PAT). It will be important to ensure parents and whānau understand what these mean.

You must provide parents and whānau with access to results from these specific assessments, such as the Phonics Check or twice-yearly assessments for Years 3–8. As a school, you'll need to decide whether to include them in the main report, attach a results summary page, or simply let parents and whānau know where they are available.

Attendance

An attendance record

Link: [Reporting to parents and whānau](#)

Next steps and actions

Look at your current reporting to parents and whānau templates.

- Which of the common components do you already report?
- What might need to be added or amended to reflect the common components required this year?
- How will you include SMART or other standardised assessment results in the reports?



Finally...

You have explored how standardised assessment information—including SMART—supports clear school-wide reporting, meaningful communication with parents and whānau, and effective strategic planning.

Strengthening how we analyse and use assessment evidence enables us to build a coherent picture of progress and ensure that teaching and learning programmes meet the diverse needs of all learners.

You now have a framework for leading a data-informed school culture - from high-level planning to reporting to parents and whānau.

