

# Professional practice is strengthened by information in PaCT reports.

Devonport Primary School uses PaCT reports as a valuable resource for professional discussions

## About us

We are a small school in a harbourside suburb of Auckland. Our vision is to be an enterprising school at the leading edge of curriculum development, united in striving for excellence. We work in active partnerships with parents and caregivers. We've been using PaCT since 2015, when it first became available, and the reports PaCT produces have informed our professional learning from the beginning.

Our analysis of the PaCT reports has helped us review our teaching and learning programmes, track students' progress, and generate questions that prompt us to dig deeper into our practice. Here's our story about how PaCT reports have helped us reflect on what we do, and some of the impacts this has had.

## Reviewing our programmes

As we started to review data in the reports, we could see the aspects where students weren't achieving. We asked questions such as "What does our curriculum look like? Where are students getting the opportunity to practise these aspects? Are we stopping them from achieving in these areas?" It was clear that there were some aspects we needed to learn more about, for example, *Using writing to think and organise for learning*, so that we could make sure we provided the opportunities for students to learn. We've spent quite a bit of time exploring the Learning Progression Frameworks since then. It's become part of our regular process for teachers to review their class aspects reports to identify the aspects where students are not achieving as highly, so more focus can be put on these in our classroom programmes.

## Tracking students' progress

We gather data in PaCT twice a year and our staff are very adept at using the reports and telling us what they mean. Initially, senior leaders flick through the PaCT judgment reports for each child and check on everybody's progress. We note who hasn't made progress, and investigate the reasons for this. We also interpret the data jointly, everybody together and in teams. We need to do it together because we have a collective responsibility for the data. We've taken responsibility for showing progress, so if children are not making progress then we openly question why this might be. Everybody is free to raise questions – senior leaders, syndicate leaders, or individual teachers. We've noticed that assessment literacy among the staff has really increased since we started working with PaCT.

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We've also developed school-wide systems for monitoring progress. We identify target students using PaCT data. These are students who need to make accelerated progress in particular areas in order to be working at the expected curriculum level. Achievement targets for these students are incorporated into our annual plan. We also have

another group of students we refer to as SARONA; these are students at risk of not achieving (we got this term from another school). These are students who have plateaued or plummeted or “bobbers”. Progress for these students is not steady so we know something is impacting on them. This can be events in their lives, or we might need to teach them differently. We also include students who have recently made accelerated progress to expected levels in the SARONA group, because we want to avoid them dropping back. We put both our target and SARONA students into groups within PaCT so their progress can be tracked easily. We’ve found PaCT is very user-friendly. The more you get into it, the more you get out of it. It’s really helpful to see the visual of progress across all students. It gives a focus on progress over time which is great.

### **Reviewing professional practice**

Senior leaders and groups of teachers also review the data and use it to generate questions about our practice. Our focus is on looking further into the data to find patterns and see what it’s telling us about the school. Using PaCT has made these professional conversations richer. Teachers now quite openly say “I’ve noticed ... ” and we have a curiosity about the data that is useful. A good example is our work reviewing the differences in boys’ and girls’ achievement in PaCT. We noticed that, in general, girls’ overall judgments in mathematics were lower than boys, which surprised us. We dug further by comparing boys’ and girls’ achievement in mathematics using other data and found that boys and girls had achieved at similar levels in PAT, e-asTTle, and GloSS. This prompted a lot of discussion among the staff as we queried why this might be happening.

Teachers looked back at their aspect judgments, and thought about what particular students were doing in the classroom programmes that informed these judgments. After quite a bit of discussion we realised that teachers were interpreting the learning behaviours of girls and boys very differently. Girls were more likely to display higher levels of anxiety when presented with challenging learning tasks, even though their achievement was identical to the boys. Girls were more likely to ask

to work with a friend, or get the teacher to check their work and teachers were interpreting this as a lack of capability. It’s really made us reflect on the way we interpret students’ responses in challenging learning situations, and we wouldn’t have been able to do this without PaCT.

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### **Informing parents, families, and whānau**

PaCT reports have also been useful for our conversations with parents. Last week a parent visited, worried about her daughter’s achievement in mathematics. When I asked her to tell me more, she said her daughter’s progress was not always steady. Sometimes she seemed to be making great progress, and sometimes not, and she was concerned her daughter wasn’t going to be ready for intermediate. We logged onto PaCT together and it turned out her hunch was right, her daughter’s learning in maths had reached a plateau. I was able to say to her “You are right, but look, she is where she needs to be, so she won’t struggle next year.” We also dug further into her assessment profile and identified one area she was struggling with, patterns and relationships, and I was able to follow up with the classroom teacher. That parent went away better informed and reassured that her daughter was doing ok. She said to me “I can’t believe I can come and see the principal and you can tell me all that about my child”. Before PaCT I would have been able to look at some results with her, maybe e-asTTle, but I wouldn’t have had the same ability to pin-point things. PaCT has given us the information we need, right there at everybody’s fingertips now.