



Report: Direction for drafting of assessment and aromatawai requirements

To:	Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education		
Date:	14/05/2025	Deadline:	21/05/2025
Security Level:	In-Confidence	Priority:	Medium
From:	Pauline Cleaver Acting Hautū Deputy Secretary Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre	Phone:	9(2)(a)
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Why are we sending this to you?

- You are receiving this report because we need to confirm your direction for requirements for assessment and aromatawai requirements. This will inform the drafting of the curriculum statements that will put these requirements in place.

What action do we need, by when?

- Draft curriculum statements containing a set of requirements for assessment and aromatawai from 2026 are planned to be released for consultation in July–August 2025. We need to consult on these at this time to ensure alignment with implementation of curriculum changes and signal the direction of travel to the sector for feedback. Consultation will help to confirm the requirements you intend to set.
- We are seeking your agreement in principle on the proposals to test through consultation. This includes decisions relating to introducing requirements in 2026 for the use of:
 - (a) Phonics Checks and Hihira Weteoro;
 - (b) twice-yearly assessment of reading, writing, and maths or pānui tuhituhi, and pāngarau using reliable tools; and
 - (c) descriptors for overall assessments of how students are progressing against curricula expectations.
- Please return the signed paper by 21 May 2025.

Key facts, issues and questions

- You have choices for when assessment and aromatawai requirements come into effect and what they will include. You do not need to make final decisions at this time. Your decisions on this paper will inform the drafting of curriculum statements, to be provided to you by the end of May 2025 seeking approval to release for public consultation.
- Finalised requirements are planned to be issued by the start of Term 4, 2025 alongside the final Years 0–13 English, Maths, Te Reo Rangatira, and Pāngarau curricula.

Alignment with Government priorities

1. This report supports the 'smarter assessment and reporting' and 'greater use of data' priorities which are contributing towards the Government's Achievement Target.

Background

2. In June 2024, you informed Cabinet [SOU-24-MIN-0060 refers] that you planned to introduce requirements in 2026 for:
 3. the use of Phonics Checks and Hihira Weteoro; and
 - 3.1. twice-yearly assessment of reading, writing, and maths, or pānui, tuhituhi, and pāngarau, for Years 3 to 8 students using reliable tools.
4. You are also interested in setting other requirements in relation to overall assessments of students' progress and achievement against expectations in the curricula, which will influence more consistent reporting to parents and whānau.
5. An updated timeline for work to put assessment and aromatawai requirements in place for 2026 is provided below. This timeline has been adjusted from what has been previously indicated [METIS 1345600 refers] so that the draft statements reflect feedback on the draft progress descriptors currently being consulted on (feedback closes at the end of June).

What	When
Advice on assessment and aromatawai checks for 2026	Now
Drafting of curriculum statements for assessment and aromatawai requirements that need to be implemented in 2026	May–July 2025
Public consultation on assessment and aromatawai requirements for implementation in 2026	July–August 2025
Finalisation of English, Mathematics & Statistics, Te Reo Rangatira, and Pāngarau curricula, including assessment and aromatawai requirements	By September 2025
Issue final Years 0–13 English, Mathematics & Statistics, Te Reo Rangatira, and Pāngarau curricula, including assessment and aromatawai requirements	By start Term 4 2025
English, Mathematics & Statistics, Te Reo Rangatira, and Pāngarau curricula inclusive of requirements for assessment and aromatawai come into effect	1 January 2026

Confirming assessment and aromatawai requirements

6. To inform the drafting of curriculum statements for consultation, this paper seeks your direction on the following matters:
 - 6.1. the phonics learning checks timepoints you intend to mandate;
 - 6.2. the assessment and aromatawai tools to be mandated for twice-yearly assessments; and
 - 6.3. direction on progress descriptors to be used for overall assessments of student progress and achievement (which will influence more consistent reporting to parents).
7. For each of these, the paper also seeks your direction on the timing for requirements come into force. As you make decisions on this, you will want to consider the *trade-off between urgency and readiness*. Building in longer lead-in time is better for readiness and change

implementation but can come at the cost of taking prompt action to shift practice and lift outcomes.

8. The draft statements will also include general expectations for effective assessment and aromatawai practices, aligned to recently released guidance.¹

(a) the phonics learning checks timepoints you intend to mandate and timing for requirements to come into force...

9. Phonics Checks and Hihira Weteoro have been available for all schools and kura to use (manually) from the start of this year and your plans to make their use required in 2026 clearly signalled. We are supporting schools and kura to undertake phonics learning checks in 2025 to support structured literacy and Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā practices and build confidence for when the use of these checks becomes a requirement.
10. Phonics Checks cover phonic decoding and there are two checks undertaken in the first 12 months of children starting school:
 - 10.1. the 20-week check (after roughly 6 months of schooling) is designed to confirm students are making the expected progress and identify if extra support is needed at this key stage of learning; and
 - 10.2. the 40-week check (after approximately 12 months of schooling) confirms that students are progressing well with more complex phonics learning. Children's phonics knowledge after a year at school is a reliable predictor of later reading and spelling success, so the 40-week check also provides useful information for monitoring how well the education system is supporting early reading and writing.
11. For Hihira Weteoro, three checks are undertaken in the first 18 months of mokopuna starting kura:
 - 11.1. the 20-week check (Te Mōhiohio Oro) covers phonological and phonemic awareness;
 - 11.2. the 40-week check (Te Mōhiohio Pūriki) covers alphabetic principle; and
 - 11.3. The 55-week check (comprised of an additional suite of aromatawai tasks – Te Mōhiohio Arapū, Kupu, Tuhi Oro, and ki te Pānui Rerenga Kōrero) covers syllable and word recognition, including a focus on writing dictated sentences.
12. **Please indicate on Table 1 the phonics learning checks timepoints you intend to require and the timing you intend for requirements to come into force.**

Table 1: Proposed phonics learning check requirements

Proposal	Considerations	Checks to be included	Agree in principle
Phonics Checks timepoints <i>We recommend both checks are made mandatory.</i>	Screening all eligible children will better ensure consistent identification of students needing literacy support. It will enable targeted teaching or accelerative intervention to help lift student progress and achievement.	> 20-week	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No
		> 40-week	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No

¹ For example, being clear that good assessment practice sees teachers and kaiako effectively monitoring, responding to, and reporting on student progress and achievement information in reliable, consistent ways and that this involves combining information from observations, classroom tasks and data from assessment tools to give a well-rounded understanding of a student's abilities.

Proposal	Considerations	Checks to be included	Agree in principle
Hihira Weteoro timepoints <i>We recommend <u>all</u> checks are made mandatory.</i>	The difference in number and timing of checks between each assessment reflects the science of learning and the learning trajectory for bilingual ākonga in reo Māori settings. Agreeing to 3 checkpoints could look like greater requirements are being placed on reo Māori settings, however, it is more important that the requirements are appropriate to the context.	> 20-week	Yes / No
		> 40-week	Yes / No
		> 55-week	Yes / No
Timing for requirements to come into force <i>We recommend that requirements for all schools and kura to use the phonics learning checks come into force <u>from the start of 2026</u></i>	Supports greater consistency and use of reliable tools to occur earlier – making sure students are progressing and appropriate responses are initiated when the need for further support is identified. The easy-to-use online platform for Phonics Checks and Hihira Weteoro is on schedule to be available by the start of 2026 and will be compatible with the wide range of I.T. systems and software used in schools/kura. Ministry will continue to actively promote, support and monitor manual use in 2025 and readiness for digital use from 2026. Introducing requirements from the start of 2026 may be perceived by sector as too short of an on-ramp, given digital tool is not currently available. However, they have had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with using the manual checks during 2025.		Yes / No

(b) the assessment and aromatawai tools to be mandated for twice-yearly assessments and timing for requirements to come into force

13. Last year you updated Cabinet on the phased approach to realising the policy objective to introduce twice-yearly assessment for students in Years 3 to 8 [SOU-24-MIN-0060 refers]:
 - 13.1. Phase 1 (2024–2025): Encourage schools and kura to use one of the tools (e-asTTle, PAT, or TWA) twice a year with all Year 3–8 students;
 - 13.2. Phase 2 (2026): Set expectations for the use of these tools, alongside requiring use of the updated English, Mathematics & Statistics, Pāngarau, and Te Reo Rangatira curricula; and
 - 13.3. Phase 3 (then-TBC): Set expectations for use of a single tool for assessment and aromatawai in the long term, to provide time for a fit-for-purpose tool to be put in place. *— we want to continue with 2 tools not one,*
14. As part of the phased implementation of twice-yearly assessment and aromatawai for Years 3 to 8 students using reliable tools, you have previously agreed in principle to mandating the use of the agreed tools in schools and kura from 2026 [METIS 1327456 refers].²
15. Since advising Cabinet of the three phased approach set out above, Cabinet have agreed to accelerated investment in a new fit-for-purpose tool, the initial release of which will be available from the start of 2026. In February 2025 when this investment was approved, you

² You have also previously indicated to Cabinet that you are considering your approach to providing access to assessment and aromatawai tools for **Years 9–10** students, to support whole-of-pathway coverage [SOU-24-MIN-0060 refers]. PATs support assessment for Years 3–10. The new tool for assessment and aromatawai will also be aligned to Years 3–10 of the updated national curricula, however the project is currently only funded to create test items for Years 3–8. Subject to funding, the tool could support progress monitoring in Years 9–10, strengthening understanding of students' progress and achievement and whether they are on track to achieve important milestones, such as the NCEA corequisite.

also reminded Cabinet on your intention to mandate twice a year assessment and aromatawai from the start of 2026 [CAB-25-MIN-0031 refers]. At this time, you also updated Cabinet on your intention for schools to retain a choice of tool for twice-yearly assessments.

16. Please indicate on **Table 2** the tools you intend to be used for twice-yearly assessments and timing for requirements to come into force.

Table 2: Proposed requirements for twice-yearly assessments of Year 3 to 8 students

Proposal	Tools and considerations	Agree in principle
<p>Timing for requirements to come into force</p> <p>Given the new tool has been accelerated, we recommend that requirements come into force in 2027 to support effect change and implementation, including managed transitions (rather than in 2026 as originally signalled to Cabinet).</p>	<p>Option 1: Introduce requirements for schools and kura to undertake twice-yearly assessments <u>from the start of 2026</u> ^{9(2)(a)} <i>said Keep asTTle for 26 as a transition</i></p> <p>Supports greater consistency and use of reliable tools to occur earlier. This will help to make sure students are progressing and appropriate responses are initiated when the need for further support is identified.</p> <p>May be perceived by sector as too short of an on-ramp for requirements, given new tool not currently available. For English and Te Reo Rangatira Years 7 to 8, this will be the first year implementing the new curricula.</p> <p>There will be a significant proportion of schools and kura to move from e-asTTle and others who are not yet using any reliable tools. This indicates the nature of the implementation challenge.</p> <p>Option 2:</p> <p>Introduce requirements for schools and kura to undertake twice-yearly assessments <u>from the start of 2027</u></p> <p>Providing time for schools and kura to familiarise themselves with the new tool and access support before making it a requirement would be best practice from a change and implementation perspective.</p> <p>Would enable schools and kura to continue using e-asTTle during 2026 so they can manage their transition.</p> <p>The foundation curriculum policy statement would still be issued in 2025 but would provide for a longer transition.</p>	<p><i>asTTle, PAT or new tool</i></p> <p>EITHER</p> <p>Option 1 (2026): <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Option 2 (2027): <input type="radio"/> Yes / No</p>
<p>Tools which can be used</p> <p>We recommend providing a choice of the new tool or PATs on an ongoing basis for the NZC and the new tool only for TMoA.</p> <p>If you choose to introduce requirements from the start of 2026 (Option 1 above), then we recommend that e-asTTle is included in the choices for a specified time</p>	<p>For <u>The New Zealand Curriculum</u> (NZC), tools which can be used to meet requirements will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > New tool (recommended ongoing) > PATs (recommended ongoing) > <i>needs to be aligned</i> e-asTTle (only recommended if you choose Option 1 above, and for a specified time period only) <p>For <u>Te Marautanga o Aotearoa</u> (TMoA), tools which can be used to meet requirements will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > New tool (recommended ongoing) > TWA (not recommended) <i>discuss</i> > e-asTTle (only recommended if you choose Option 1 above, and for a specified time period only) <p>TWA was originally signalled as a tool to give parity of choice to te reo Māori pathways, but we advise against including it as a choice. The new tool will be designed</p>	<p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No</p> <p>Yes / No</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No</p>

9(2)(g)(i)

period to support managed transitions.	seamlessly with the redesigned TMOA. We have already been advising kura to move away from TWA. ³ e-asTTle is being replaced by the new tool and will be decommissioned by the end of 2026.	
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(c) the approach to adding direction on overall assessments of student progress and achievement (which will influence more consistent reporting to parents and whānau) and timing for requirements to come into force

17. Under existing regulations, schools and kura need to report progress and achievement to children’s parents using good quality assessment and aromatawai information. Quality assessment and aromatawai includes information from reliable tools where these are required or available (there are fewer reliable tools available for learning beyond literacy and maths). A knowledge-rich national curricula that is detailed and clear about year-by-year progression and what teaching should occur also helps to make it easier for teachers to make judgements about where a student is at in terms of progress.
18. Earlier this month you agreed to common progress descriptors to be provided as drafts to schools and kura for feedback, ahead of more fulsome guidance and support [METIS 1346292 refers]. This sits within wider work to realise your vision for reporting to parents, which includes actions across the curriculum, assessment, aromatawai, data, digital and policy work programmes [METIS 1342504 refers]. We recently released the draft progress descriptors on Tāhūrangi as part of reporting to parents guidance to support schools in 2025, with feedback closing at the end of June.
19. These descriptors are intended to be used by teachers to summarise their overall assessment of how students are tracking against the expectations in the curricula; this means that they can be included as part of assessment and aromatawai requirements. As with other assessment and aromatawai requirements, this will *influence* the approach schools and kura use in reporting and they are likely to be adopted for these purposes. If you wish to go as far as requiring the descriptors to be used in reporting, then you will need to use another regulatory mechanism (discussed further below).
20. **Please indicate in Table 3 whether you wish to include common progress descriptors as part of assessment and aromatawai requirements. If so, please also indicate the timing you intend for these requirements to come into force.**

Table 3: Requirements to use common descriptors for assessments of students’ overall progress and achievement against curricula expectations

Proposal	Considerations	Agreement in principle
Common progress descriptors <i>We recommend these are included</i>	Provide consistent language for how teachers should describe their overall assessment of how a student is tracking against curriculum expectations. Would make a step towards your vision for consistent and clear reporting to parents, while you consider changes to reporting requirements via other mechanisms.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No

↳ needs to be across PAT, CIPS etc

³ As with the Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT), we do not consider TWA a genuine equivalent to the new tool, PAT, or e-asTTle. Like PaCT the TWA tool is not aligned to the new curricula.

Proposal	Considerations	Agreement in principle
Timing of requirements Introduce requirements to use the common descriptors in the curriculum statements <u>from the start of 2026</u>	Provides clear direction for schools/kura on how to describe progress against the new Years 0–13 English, Mathematics & Statistics, Te Reo Rangatira, and Pāngarau curricula expectations. The new common descriptors will align with science of learning and knowledge-rich curricula. Potential for confusion – schools/kura will have existing approaches and descriptors they are using for the other learning areas/wāhanga ako and may feel they need to change these ahead of the new curricula for those coming into force. Could be managed through Ministry communications and guidance.	Yes / No 5 of others (after consultation)

Regulatory approach overview

21. The mechanism for setting assessment and aromatawai requirements is 'foundation curriculum policy statements'.⁴ These give direction to the way curriculum and assessment or aromatawai responsibilities are to be managed in schools and kura and meet existing reporting requirements.⁵ Once twice-yearly assessments and the phonics learning checks are required by a foundation curriculum policy statement, students will need to have these checks and assessments as set out in the requirements.
22. By providing guidance on what good assessment and aromatawai practice looks like, curriculum statements also support and influence reporting on progress and achievement. However, while reporting will be *influenced* by curriculum statements, they cannot be used to directly prescribe reporting to parents requirements. We are providing you with separate advice about any legislation or regulation changes needed to support your vision for reporting to parents, as part of the broader approach to strengthening the curriculum regulatory system [METIS 1345871 refers].

23. 9(2)(f)(iv)



24. As Minister of Education, you have the authority to issue these instruments under the Act. The finalised requirements will begin in 2026 for a) the full Years 0–13 English, Te Reo Rangatira, Mathematics & Statistics, and Pāngarau curricula; and b) assessment and aromatawai. While you have previously updated Cabinet on both your curriculum and assessment work programmes [SOU-24-MIN-0051 and SOU-24-MIN-0060 refer], the

⁴ These are made as secondary legislation under section 90(1) of the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) and notified in the New Zealand Gazette | Te Kāhiti o Aotearoa. Under the Act, section 90 curriculum statements place direct requirements on all State and State-integrated schools and kura.

⁵ Section 165 of the Education and Training Act 2020; Regulation 21 of the Education (School Boards) Regulations 2020; and Regulation 10 of the Education (School Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2023.

⁶ 9(2)(f)(iv)

regulatory proposals and content were not set out in detail. In line with the Cabinet Manual, significant policy issues should be submitted to Cabinet, and we will support you to update Cabinet in late 2025.

25. Curriculum statements can be updated over time in line with the development and implementation of any further assessments to strengthen consistent modes of monitoring student progression and achievement along the pathway (e.g., early mathematics and pāngarau checks, and school entry assessments).

Implementation in Kaupapa Māori schooling

26. As part of consultation on draft updates to the foundation curriculum policy statements, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) will run targeted engagements with Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa and Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa. This will provide an opportunity to fully understand their views on aromatawai and reporting requirements and consider their desired approach. Note that the Act does not currently enable different implementation dates for different types of schools, such as kaupapa Māori schools.
27. The Ministry is in discussion with Te Rūnanga Nui about a bespoke model for Kura Kaupapa Māori, which would have agreed reporting requirements. If this model goes ahead, the aromatawai requirements discussed in this paper would likely not apply in full. We have also had initial discussions with Ngā Kura ā Iwi about this model.

Considerations for students with identified needs

28. Curriculum statement requirements apply to all state and state-integrated schools and kura and to all the students they teach. The disability community will want assurance that any proposed requirements are accessible and meet the needs of Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent people, including the use of universal design principles and appropriate accommodations. Draft requirements will set out the way in which assessment and aromatawai responsibilities are to be managed to accommodate student diversity. If the requirements are not in a student's best interests due to an identified need, appropriate approaches to assessment and aromatawai will be able to be agreed in partnership with the student and/or their family as part of a student's individual education plan.

Next Steps

29. Once you have confirmed your decisions on this paper, we will draft curriculum statements for associated requirements that need to be implemented in 2026, in preparation for consultation in July–August 2025.
30. The draft curriculum statements and consultation materials will be provided to you in a Report in early July which will seek your agreement to release them for public consultation. This will include details on the communications and consultation approach.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **note** that we are seeking your direction on the timing and approach to regulatory changes to support the drafting of foundation curriculum policy statements for assessment, aromatawai, and reporting to parents and whānau for consultation in July–August 2025 (Noted)
- b. **note** that you do not need to make final decisions at this time, and can direct the Ministry to update the draft curriculum statements to take in any feedback received through consultation (Noted)
- c. **indicate your agreement in principle on Tables 1–5 above** for requirements to be included in draft curriculums statements as these relate to:
- i. Phonics Checks and Hihira Weteoro checks (see Table 1, pages 3–4)
 - ii. Twice-yearly assessment and aromatawai (see Table 2, pages 5–6)
 - iii. Elements to support more consistent descriptors for overall assessments of how students are progressing against curricula expectations (see Table 3, page 6-7) ✓ Indicated on Tables 1–3
- d. **note** that as part of consultation on the draft curriculum statements the Ministry will undertake targeted engagements with Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa and Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa as well as specialist education peak bodies (Noted)
- e. **note** that finalised assessment and aromatawai requirements are planned to be integrated with the full Years 0–13 English, Mathematics & Statistics, Te Reo Rangatira, and Pāngarau curricula, which are planned to be issued by the start of Term 4, 2025 (Noted)
- f. **note** that, before making curriculum statements, you should update Cabinet in line with the Cabinet Manual expectations, and we will support you to do this later in 2025 ✓ (Noted)

Proactive Release:

- g. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this paper once final decisions on any associated consultation have been communicated, with any information needing to be withheld done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982. ~~(Agree)~~ (Disagree)

Release

Pauline Cleaver
Acting Hautū | Deputy Secretary
Te Poutāhū | Curriculum Centre

14/05/2025

ESfed

Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Education

2,6,25