

The consistency of judgments at Lynmore School.

About us

We are a large primary school in Rotorua catering for students from years 0 to 6. We value aroha, integrity, courage, and curiosity. We think students learn best when they have the courage to take risks to learn about things they are curious about, and this philosophy underpins how students learn across the curriculum in all areas. We've been using PaCT since it first became available in 2015, and over that time we've thought a lot about how we can ensure our judgments are consistent. We recently experimented with an approach which focuses on developing a shared understanding of the Learning Progression Frameworks (LPFs) to support teachers to make consistent judgments. Here's our story about what we tried, how we found it, and how we're going to work on consistency now.

How we got started

When we first started thinking about how we could support teachers to make consistent PaCT judgments, we relied heavily on students' work. We focused on one aspect at a time, and teachers would come to meetings with a best-fit signpost for a particular student in mind. All the teachers who had identified the same signpost sat together, talked about why they had placed their students at a particular signpost, compared work samples, and looked at the exemplars in the LPFs. Teachers would move between groups as needed, to find the best-fit signpost for their student. At the end of the process the group had a shared understanding of what achievement at that particular signpost looks like for their students.

The process helped us develop our understanding, but it took ages, and at the end of a long day it just felt tedious. Teachers spent a lot of time flicking through students' work, looking for examples of work to illustrate their thinking, and trying to justify their judgments.

Focusing on the frameworks

I'd started to wonder whether there was a better process we could use to help teachers develop a shared understanding of how to use the LPFs to make judgments. After talking it over with some colleagues, I decided we should try focusing exclusively on the frameworks, without using any students' work samples at all.

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When we next met together as a staff to think about making writing judgments, the teachers didn't bring any student work or focus on any particular students. We started by talking about how to make a best-fit judgment. We watched a short video¹ and read some information about the role of moderation in PaCT² then looked at some information about the writing framework from the curriculum progress tools website³. Then we got into groups, with one teacher from each year level in each group. We looked at the writing framework and focused on the *Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features* progression. We considered the differences between each of the signposts, and talked about what changed from one signpost to the next. Each group produced a document that described the step-ups between the signposts, but it was the discussion that was important. We were unpacking our understanding of the progression and really thinking about how students' knowledge and understanding build.

A positive approach that builds deeper understanding

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The teachers found it reasonably straightforward to identify the differences between the first three signposts. The differences between the ones that came after were less obvious because these focused more on applying the skill of writing than on its development. The exemplars came into their own. The teachers brought a different mindset to the discussion, focusing on understanding rather than on marking. This provided a greater clarity about the progressions and the differences between the signposts. It was a very powerful way to build curriculum knowledge.

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We found it was much quicker than our previous process. We covered two progressions in an hour! The teachers didn't have to flick through piles of student work, searching for the one bit of evidence to prove their point. We were surprised to find that the focus on understanding the progressions also reduced teachers' anxiety. Discussing their judgments of students' work had sometimes made them anxious and defensive, especially when disagreements arose.

The impact of the approach

Once we'd been through this process, the teachers felt much more confident to make judgments. They whizzed through their groups of students, quickly assigning the best-fit signpost. Their familiarity with the writing framework brought a

real clarity to the process. We continued to support teachers' judgments with ongoing discussions. Teachers had plenty of opportunity to talk to their colleagues or senior leaders about judgments they were unsure about, drawing on the understanding of the progression that they'd developed together.

We've reflected on the new process as a staff, and decided we're going to continue with it. We're also going to use it more regularly, as a way to build and refresh our curriculum knowledge. The progressions give us plenty to work with, and we don't need to limit our discussions to the times when we're making judgments. We're going to spend time focusing on the progressions that teachers found it most difficult to make judgments for, as those are the areas where we really need to build our understanding.

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1. *An introduction to making PaCT judgments* available from the *Making PaCT judgments* page of the Curriculum Progress Tools website.
 2. *The role of moderation when using PaCT* available from the *Making PaCT judgments* page of the Curriculum Progress Tools website.
 3. *A rationale for the seven aspects in the writing framework*, available from the *Understanding the writing framework* page of the Curriculum Progress Tools website.