



# School leaders' good practice:

## Professional learning and development



GOOD PRACTICE FRAMEWORK



EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE  
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

August 2025






# Content

---

Introduction to the Good Practice Framework	2
Summary of the Good Practice Framework	5
Well-designed	6
Well-selected	12
Well-embedded	18
Conclusion	23
Useful resources	24





# Introduction to the Good Practice Framework

Effective PLD is a critical part of ensuring teachers can make a difference for students. School leaders play a key role in supporting this so that what teachers learn from PLD is well-designed, well-selected, and well-embedded. This guide sets out a Good Practice Framework to providing effective PLD for teachers.

## What does this guide cover?

**Quality teaching is critical for student outcomes. Developing our teachers is one of the biggest levers for raising student achievement.**

Education Review Office (ERO), from the report *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025)

The evidence shows that when professional learning and development (PLD) is done well, it can have a significant impact on teachers and their students. Ongoing learning is a requirement of the teaching profession and can support improvements in teaching practice. Making sure that our teachers are provided with high quality PLD is crucial for improving learning outcomes for students. Fortunately, there is a strong and growing evidence base about what makes PLD effective.

The Good Practice Framework (the Framework) provides guidance on what works when designing and selecting PLD, as informed by national and international evidence. Through highlighting good practice, we hope to support leaders to select, design and implement effective PLD that has the biggest impact for teachers and students.

## Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended to support those who design and select PLD for teachers. This includes leaders in primary and secondary schools, as well as external providers of training services. Teachers may also find this guide useful.

## How to use this guide?

**The international evidence is clear what PLD has the biggest impact – teachers' development needs to be well-designed (so it is based on the best evidence) and well-selected (so it meets teachers' needs) and well-embedded (so it sticks).**

Education Review Office (ERO), from the report *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025)

This guide is designed to provide practical guidance for ensuring PLD is effective. It includes the three components for what PLD should be – well designed, well-selected, and well-embedded – to support leader decision-making. Each of these components has a section in this guide, which includes the key elements to ensure that component is met, as well as real life examples and reflective questions to support practical application.

The Framework presented in this guide is supported by findings from the Education Review Office's National Review *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* and acts as a companion resource. You can find this here: [evidence.ero.govt.nz](https://evidence.ero.govt.nz). The experiences that were shared with us, and local and international research base, affirm that better PLD provision and support has the potential to transform teacher practice and lead to better outcomes for students.

Alongside this guide, ERO has developed a one-page Good Practice Framework reference. You can find this here: [Framework tool](#). Additional useful resources are provided at the end of this guide.

“Education is constantly growing and you have to constantly grow with it... I love it [PLD] and will jump at any chance... it really is an opportunity, and sharing our expertise within a school is really valuable. You always take away something little that you can add to your practice, and that is really important.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER



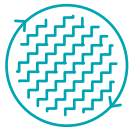
## What is PLD?

**We invest substantially in teacher development, both centrally and in schools. In New Zealand, formal PLD is not a requirement for teachers, unlike similar professions and some other countries.**

Education Review Office (ERO), from the report *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025)

In this guide, we keep a narrow focus on professional learning and development (PLD) as a structured and facilitated activity for teachers, intended to increase their teaching ability.

PLD can take many forms, including in-house sessions led by school leaders or expert teachers (internal PLD) to programmes and courses delivered by specialist providers from outside the school (external PLD). PLD is not always focused on curriculum; it can include classroom management practices or whole school initiatives. While schools also provide training on systems, software, or compliance, these are outside our definition of PLD.



# Summary of the Good Practice Framework

## COMPONENT 1: WELL-DESIGNED PLD

### Well-designed PLD needs to:

- 1) build teachers' knowledge
- 2) help teachers develop teaching techniques
- 3) give teachers the tools to take what they have learnt and use it
- 4) motivate teachers to use what they have learnt.

## COMPONENT 2: WELL-SELECTED PLD

### Well-selected PLD needs to:

- 1) be relevant to school, student, and teacher needs
- 2) focus on student outcomes
- 3) be evidence-based and effective.

## COMPONENT 3: WELL-EMBEDDED PLD

### When PLD is well-embedded:

- 1) teachers are expected and supported to use what they have learnt
- 2) teachers are clear about where adaptations can be made, or not
- 3) the effectiveness of any changes is monitored.

# 1 Well-designed



Well-designed PLD means designing and delivering high quality PLD that has the components that matter – based on the evidence.

## Why does well-designed PLD matter?

**We need teacher development to have more impact for teachers and a stronger return on investment. Too much PLD does not shift teacher practice.**

Education Review Office (ERO), from the report *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025)

How PLD is designed, and its content, make a big difference to its potential impacts on student outcomes. Effective PLD design and delivery ensures that teachers' learning is informed by evidence and set up to support meaningful change to teacher practice. When PLD is designed and delivered well, teachers gain practical tools and strategies that they can easily apply in their classrooms. Teachers also are clear about how to implement these tools and strategies in ways that maintain impact.

## How can we ensure that PLD is well-designed?

Well-designed PLD needs to:

- 1) build teachers' knowledge
- 2) help teachers develop teaching techniques
- 3) give teachers the tools to take what they have learnt and use it
- 4) motivate teachers to use what they have learnt.

## Building teacher knowledge

**Effective PLD is carefully planned and paced to build teachers' knowledge and skills over time.**

Good PLD design requires careful pacing and ongoing support to keep up momentum and improvement. School leaders need to carefully consider useful and realistic ways of setting out PLD sessions, as well as the practical supports (like observations and meetings) that will help embed that learning in the classroom.



“Internal capability building is essential. Long-term impact comes from embedding learning within teams, not just contracting it in.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Key considerations are:

- being responsive to different levels of expertise and experience
- making sure that content is focused and relevant, and delivered at the right time for teachers to use it
- building a sense of ‘ownership’ among staff
- how PLD will fit into other PLD that is already planned or underway at the school
- how and when leaders will support teachers to revisit, recap, and monitor their learning and practice shifts.

Building knowledge well over time might include leaders designing a term-by-term rollout plan for PLD so that teachers can learn new things in manageable chunks. This includes building in check-ins to revisit and reinforce key ideas over time, supporting retention and understanding. When teachers are exposed to new information, they should have time to process and retain it in ways that support effective practice, without being overwhelmed.

#### DID YOU KNOW

Teachers are over four times more likely to report improved practice when internal PLD helps them build off what they know.<sup>a</sup>

## Developing teaching techniques

**Teachers should develop a range of useful teaching techniques from PLD, so they can select what works best for their students.**

Teachers need a variety of techniques, so they can adapt their instruction to meet the needs of their students. Effective PLD makes sure teachers know *how* to teach, as well as *what* to teach.

“You want something that is useful for teachers to increase outcomes. When we think about really good PLD we need to be ... using them in our demonstrations, so teachers can see what they look like... I think it’s best to actually demonstrate with something, so they know how it’s being used effectively in different parts of a lesson.”

PLD PROVIDER

<sup>a</sup> Our ‘Did you know’ data points are sourced from ERO’s report *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025).

Key considerations are:

- instructing teachers on how to perform a technique – providing clear, step-by-step guidance
- arranging practical support – creating opportunities for collaboration, coaching, or peer learning
- modelling the technique – showing what good practice looks like in action
- providing feedback – offering constructive, targeted feedback to help teachers improve
- rehearsing the technique – giving teachers time and space to practise in a safe environment.

When designing PLD, it is important to focus on what supports teachers to develop techniques which can be practically applied. We heard PLD providers do this well when sessions include group activities, discussions, and opportunities to collaborate and learn from peers.

#### DID YOU KNOW

Teachers are four times more likely to report an improvement when external PLD develops teaching techniques.

## Giving teachers the tools they need

**Teachers should benefit from practical, classroom-ready tools to take what they have learnt and use it.**

Well-designed PLD supports teachers with tools to take what they have learnt and apply it immediately in the classroom – for example, prompts, props, scripts, assessment frameworks, exemplars, or learning activity examples. Providing classroom-ready tools gives teachers a clear action for following up on their learning, so that their new learning isn't just forgotten after their PLD session.

Ensuring that practical, ready-to-use tools are part of the design of PLD is key for it to be effective. Teachers that we talked to affirmed the value of balancing the 'theory' behind PLD, which is important, with the 'practical' – what actually happens in the classroom. Teachers also emphasised that the most useful tools are ready to use straight away, otherwise they are tempted to leave it for later when they have more time.

#### DID YOU KNOW

Teachers are over four times more likely to report an improvement when external PLD gives teachers practical tools they can use.

“The structured literacy programme explicitly taught us how to use the resources, how to go through the entire book and the speed word, fun ways of teaching. Understanding why it works, how it goes through all the letters, and being able to read independently and confidently...”

PRIMARY SCHOOL BEGINNING TEACHER



## Motivating Teachers

### Teachers' motivation and 'buy-in' are important for ensuring PLD is effective.

Teachers are more likely to engage with and apply new learning when they understand its purpose, see its relevance, and feel supported to succeed. Teachers can more easily see the value of PLD, and are more motivated to engage, when there is clear evidence that it has led to improved outcomes for students in the past. It helps when this evidence is supported with a strong explanation of how the learning can be applied to the teacher's specific context.

"I like PLD where you can come away with something solid and tangible that you can apply the next day."

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADER

Credibility of the school staff or external provider who will deliver the learning, as well as the credibility of the programme or practice to be learnt, are key to teachers trusting that PLD is worth their efforts.

Three considerations that help motivate teachers to turn learning into action are:

- setting and agreeing on goals – helping teachers understand what the PLD is aiming to achieve
- presenting information from a credible source – using trusted experts or evidence-based content
- providing affirmation and reinforcement – recognising teachers' progress and identifying their success.

In practice, this means designing PLD that has a clear purpose and is aligned with both school priorities and teachers' needs. Leaders focus on ensuring that content is relevant to the school's context, responds to the needs identified in school and student data, and that teachers will be able to use and benefit from PLD.

"Teachers engage best when PLD is tied to their curriculum area and classroom realities."

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers told us they are more motivated to use what they have learnt in their classrooms when they see PLD as a way to grow their practice and develop them in the profession. Leaders play a key role in shaping this culture, ensuring that staff feel supported and valued rather than needing to be "fixed."

#### DID YOU KNOW

Teachers are over five times more likely to report an improvement in their practice when external PLD motivates them to use what they have learnt.

## How does well-designed PLD work in practice?

### Real-life example: Intentional and clear PLD provides strong motivation

We heard from a beginning teacher that being off-site for PLD is helpful for giving them 'thinking space' and a chance to reflect. The clarity and explicit instruction they experienced through attending PLD had a strongly motivating effect.

“I am a beginning teacher and what was really good for me is that I was offered to go to the... course and it's so great to get those basics and a support system in place. But in my previous school, none of that was offered... It was amazing and it was good to hear everyone else's experiences. There are some things that you don't get taught how to do that and it's so amazing that you get explicitly taught. Making connections and social groups, getting into classroom management pedagogies... Every time I've gone to the course, there is always something valuable to bring back. As a BRT [beginning registered teacher], you don't really know what you need to know unless someone tells you, so I really appreciate being told what would be good for you, rather than looking for it yourself.”

**BEGINNING TEACHER**

### Real-life example: Practical tools to build new teaching techniques

One example we heard was providing teachers with 'quick-win' tasks and strategies. We heard from teachers that they value coming away from PLD with a specific resource or strategy to immediately try out in their classroom. Examples of this included a questioning framework to deepen student thinking, and a visual tool to support students to understand new concepts in a particular subject area.

“When they sprinkle in bits that generate an immediate change... they're not telling you to change your entire teaching practice, just giving you bits and pieces that make a huge impact – practical, approachable, and doable”

**PRIMARY SCHOOL BEGINNING TEACHER**

## Reflective questions

- What level of existing knowledge and skills do our staff have, and how do we ensure we build on this?
- Does our PLD strike the right balance between practical tools and classroom-ready resources, and the theory that supports them?
- What can we do to help build a sense of ownership, engagement, and buy-in from teachers?
- How well does the PLD we offer internally build teachers' knowledge, develop teaching techniques, and provide teachers with the tools to take what they've learnt and use it? Which elements are we better at?
- What signals do we send to staff about the value and purpose of PLD? Are these signals encouraging teachers to be engaged and motivated, or to see PLD as a chore?

## 2 Well-selected



Well-selected PLD aligns with the school's strategic goals and priorities for individual teacher development.

### Why does well-selected PLD matter?

**We need teacher development that shifts student outcomes. Around a quarter of teachers report PLD does not improve student outcomes much or at all.**

Education Review Office (ERO), from the report *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025)

Good PLD selection ensures that teachers' learning is relevant, evidence-informed, aligned with school needs, and set up to support meaningful change to teacher practice. This really matters – not only for the difference it can make for students, but also because our resources for PLD are limited. Time, money, and teachers' cognitive load are not infinite. When planning and selecting PLD are done well, resource and effort is allocated to what matters most.

### How can we ensure that PLD is well-selected?

Leaders might choose to arrange PLD provision from external providers, or offer internal PLD that draws off the expertise of their staff.

Regardless of how it is provided, well-selected PLD needs to:

- 1) be relevant to school, student, and teacher needs
- 2) focus on student outcomes
- 3) be credible and evidence-based.

In New Zealand schools, principals work closely with the school board, teaching staff, and the wider community to decide on strategic improvement plans. Effective strategic planning clearly sets out long-term goals and the sequence of actions needed to get there – this will often include teachers' PLD.

## Relevant to schools, student, and teacher needs

### Effective PLD selection uses data and evidence to be relevant and is focused on what matters most.

To select teacher PLD that will make a real difference, school leaders focus on ensuring that content is relevant to the school's context and needs, and that students will benefit. This means stopping to think and take stock, identifying where PLD should be prioritised, and then shaping up a plan.

“You’ve got this massive landscape and it’s about knowing what’s important.” – Primary school principal”

PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Data and evidence are the cornerstones of good PLD decisions. Rather than making decisions based on teacher requests or individual interests, school leaders should look to achievement data, evidence of progress, and other student outcome data. It is important not to be drawn into less-relevant PLD just because it is accessible, available, affordable, or of personal interest.

“One-size-fits-all doesn’t fit. A beginner teacher doesn’t need the same PLD that we [experienced teachers] need. We can have whole school on important subjects, but we need to be more selective on how we organise it... dedicated, more specific sessions.”

EXPERIENCED SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

This may involve making use of school-wide data patterns across student achievement, progress trajectories, or wellbeing and behaviour data. Schools may identify evidence of achievement decline in particular learning areas or cohort-specific learning gaps.

Sometimes these data patterns are identified at a national level and signalled to schools by the Ministry of Education, such as the current national decline in literacy and numeracy achievement. When this happens, leaders may want to closely examine their own schools’ data to identify what this national trend looks like in their specific context. Nationwide shifts in practice or expectations, like curriculum changes or new mandates, are also considered when planning and prioritising.

As part of their decision-making, school leaders should also consider data from their ongoing monitoring of the impact of any previous PLD and use this information to inform choices around timing, provider selection, delivery methods, and other selection and design elements. One of the most powerful strategies leaders can use is to create feedback loops – where teachers can monitor the impacts PLD has on student learning and receive feedback from observations to understand if it is working before moving on to new learning.

#### DID YOU KNOW

When school leaders select external PLD or design their own teacher development, they focus most on making sure it's relevant to their schools' needs. Nearly all leaders (97 percent) focus a lot on how the programme features align with their school priorities.

### Focused on student outcomes

PLD must have a clear link to student outcomes to be effective.

PLD can be focused on a wide variety of topics or techniques, but not all of these are focused on improving student outcomes. Selecting PLD well means targeting the things that matter most. In our National Review, around a quarter of teachers told us that PLD does *not* improve student outcomes much or at all.

“I need PLD that I can immediately use with the students... to increase their achievement.”

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

In New Zealand, centrally-funded PLD is focused on specific national priorities, like structured literacy approaches and ways to teach maths. School leaders and boards can also choose to use their operational funds for PLD. This might be focused on things like boosting teachers' knowledge in other subjects, or building on past PLD learning. School leaders should ensure that when they select PLD, they focus on programmes which can shift student outcomes.

#### DID YOU KNOW

Internal PLD that supports external PLD and embeds it can be some of the most effective.



## Credible and evidence-based

### Quality PLD uses credible, evidence-based interventions and providers

Good PLD selection requires school leaders to carefully assess the strength of different options. They consider whether they have the expertise within their school to design and deliver the learning, or whether they will need to source expertise externally. It is crucially important that their choices consider the evidence base of the PLD learning (the topic or programme) as well as the PLD delivery method itself.

“Having that evidence base is important and understanding why we are doing what we are doing.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL BEGINNING TEACHER

In New Zealand, there is no set standard for PLD providers to be assessed against as evidence-based and effective. Instead, school leaders might check credibility by looking at whether a PLD provider works with the Ministry of Education or is recommended by other school leaders. When school leaders select PLD, they should ask to see that it is well supported by evidence.

### *How can we tell if an external provider is credible?*

We talked to experienced school leaders and PLD providers about how to tell whether an external provider is credible. The questions to ask providers include:

- Does this PLD draw on recent practical experience embedding this in New Zealand classrooms?
- Can you give us copies of the research that has informed this PLD?
- Does this PLD align easily with the curriculum?
- Will this programme make sense in our context – considering our community, demographics, school size, current challenges, and other special characteristics?
- Can you share some examples of impact reports on shifts in teacher practices and student outcomes that you have contributed to?
- Can you provide references from one or two school leaders from similar schools?
- What is the balance of theoretical discussion about why a practice is important, and practical guidance around how it is done?
- Can you tell us about the sorts of practical tools and resources that will be provided?
- How will you support us to decide from the outset on outcomes we want to see, and the methods to monitor and evaluate the impact of the PLD on leaders, teachers, and students?

## How does well-selected PLD work in practice?

### Real-life example: Linking PLD planning to the school's data-related strategic goals

It can help with consistency for teachers when there is alignment between a school's strategic plan and the school's PLD. One school we visited has a strategic focus on improving teachers' capability to support the achievement of particular groups of students and selects PLD that supports this goal. Another primary school we visited has a strategic target of improving literacy achievement for their students and has focused on PLD on this. Clearly aligning the school's data picture, the strategic plan, and the PLD planning is important to ensure that new learning complements existing work.

“We wanted a programme that would complement what we're already doing.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



### Real-life example: Prioritising, planning, selecting, and pacing internal PLD

One urban primary school takes a deliberate and carefully paced approach to planning and selecting internal PLD. Each year, the senior leadership team begins with an in-depth review alongside teachers, reflecting on what has gone well and where student outcomes could be improved. The team synthesises this feedback to identify the school's strengths, needs, and opportunities. From there, they develop a term-by-term embedding plan. This plan helps manage the pace of change and reduces cognitive load for teachers. The plan also includes induction support for new staff, ensuring everyone is prepared and on the same page.

Planning and selection allows for much of the internal PLD in this school to be delivered in team-based settings rather than whole-staff sessions. This includes regular meetings and informal check-ins, especially for beginning teachers.

Teachers respond positively to this approach. They appreciate having the clarity, relevance, and support. The teachers also told us how much they value the approach of school leaders, who are approachable, open to feedback, and actively involved in PLD planning.

## Reflective questions

- Have recent PLD programmes been effective for our teachers and/or our students? What could we have done differently at the planning or selection stage?
- How can we make sure that teachers are learning PLD content that is right for them, at the right time?
- Are we being evidence-driven when planning and selecting PLD? What other factors might be distracting us or getting in the way?
- Would it be useful for us to engage with ERO's Teacher observation framework to identify where improvements in teacher practice are needed?
- What are the barriers, like time constraints, staffing challenges, or rigid timetables, that we need to consider when deciding our approach?
- Who is involved in planning and selecting PLD in our school, and how can we support their leadership capability (including syndicate leaders and curriculum leads — to reinforce learning within their teams)?
- Do we have a multi-year vision for PLD, with coherent sequencing and follow-up?
- How well do we engage with the school board to examine school data and make decisions about where PLD investment is most needed?
- How might we better distribute leadership for PLD across the school? Could this be an opportunity to challenge teachers to 'buy in' to changes where they might have been reluctant?



## Well-embedded



Well-embedded PLD means that teachers embed what they have learned, so it makes a positive and lasting impact on their practice.

### Why does well-embedded PLD matter?

**We need development for teachers to be better embedded, particularly in secondary schools.**

Education Review Office (ERO), from the report *Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?* (2025)

It is not enough to know what good practice looks like – teachers need to use what they have learnt to improve student outcomes. This is about real-life changes in the classroom, and maintaining these over time. When embedding goes well, teachers are well supported to sustain good practice and school leaders are involved and committed to the process. Embedding is what turns *theory* into *practice*, ensuring that new learning becomes part of the school's ongoing teaching culture and classroom practice.

Well-embedded PLD is actively supported by school leaders. They use plans, processes, and professional supports, as well as revisiting and recapping new learning with teachers. Good support is in place for monitoring the impact of changes on teacher practice and student outcomes.

### How can we ensure that PLD is well-embedded?

When PLD is well-embedded:

- 1) teachers are expected and supported to use what they have learnt
- 2) teachers are clear about where adaptations can be made, or not
- 3) effectiveness of any changes is monitored.

### Expected and supported to use learnings

Leaders should actively support teachers to embed what they have learnt. This helps turn theory into practice and leads to better outcomes for students.

**“If you don’t find a way to implement it, it’s all for nothing.”**

**PLD PROVIDER**



In our National Review, we heard that teachers are not always clear about how to use what they have learnt from their development in their classroom. Teacher development often lacks practical guidance and focusses too much on theory. This leaves teachers unsure about how to apply their learning in their classroom.

School leaders have a crucial role in embedding learning into practice and preventing teachers from returning to 'business as usual' after engaging in new learning. To ensure PLD learning actually impacts on practice, school leaders need to prioritise embedding PLD throughout school plans, processes, and professional supports (like strategic plans and goals, meetings and discussions, observations, feedback, policies, and inductions for new staff).

Leaders can show staff how much they value their learning by participating in the learning themselves and modelling use of what they have learnt.

**DID YOU KNOW**

Half of teachers are not completely clear about how to use what they have learnt from their development in their classroom.

## Clear on how and when to adapt learnings

**To be effective, PLD providers need to be clear about what teachers can adapt, and what must be followed exactly to achieve the intended outcomes.**

Well-designed and well-selected PLD provides teachers with new knowledge and teaching techniques that are proven to be effective – but only if they are implemented correctly. However, teachers are also expected to adapt the way they work with students, so that all students learn and progress.

“It's starting from things that we know are important for us, and growing from there.”

PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

To ensure teachers can embed their learning meaningfully, and also be responsive, PLD providers need to be explicit about how teachers can take what they have learnt and adapt it, and what parts have to be followed exactly. Part of this is taking into account teacher experience when providing PLD, and providing guidance on how learnings can be practically implemented.

For example, when introducing teachers to structured literacy approaches, PLD providers explain its research foundation. They emphasise that core components like explicit phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, and cumulative review must be followed as designed, and that adapting these could impact the effectiveness of this approach.

## Monitoring of effectiveness

### Monitoring is needed to ensure that PLD learning and practice changes are having the intended impacts.

Giving teachers the right knowledge for *what* to teach, and *how* to teach it, does not necessarily transfer to changes in their classroom practice.

Embedding change well requires leaders and teachers to monitor the effectiveness of their changes. Monitoring needs to be realistic about what impacts should be expected and when.

Effective PLD sets teachers up for success by giving them practical tools and strategies to help them use what they have learnt. These include:

- prompts and cues – using reminders to keep new strategies top of mind
- action planning – supporting teachers to plan when and how they'll use a new technique
- self-monitoring – helping teachers reflect on what's working and what could be improved
- context-specific repetition – reinforcing learning through repeated use in real classroom settings.

We heard from teachers that some of their most impactful and practical PLD included a gradual release of responsibility. This is where the PLD facilitator demonstrates, then uses the tool or strategy with teachers, then observes teachers using the tool or strategy and provides feedback.

**“You've got to evaluate every thread... and see whether it's achieving what you want it to achieve.”**

**PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

Leaders and teachers need to monitor whether they are embedding the intended changes (to content or to teaching techniques), and what differences that is making for teachers and students. This means gathering feedback, examining data, checking in regularly, and being willing to adapt when things aren't working.

Leaders and teachers can monitor how well the embedding is going by doing things like observing how students are responding to new practices, using digital tools to track embedding, and monitoring impact over time.

When all these elements are in place, PLD can lead to lasting change in teaching practice. It becomes a driver of real, lasting improvement and positive outcomes for teachers and students.

#### **DID YOU KNOW**

Nearly a quarter (22 percent) of teachers report external PLD did not improve student outcomes either 'very much' or 'at all'.

## How does well-embedded PLD work in practice?

### Real-life example: Embedding PLD by having expert teachers lead reflective activities between PLD sessions

Teachers, especially those who are new or overseas trained, told us how valuable it is to learn from experienced, and trusted teachers in their school. These relationships provide a safe space for asking questions, reflecting on practice, and receiving live feedback. Following up PLD with informal conversations and mentoring for these teachers helps build on what they learn from sessions, grows their confidence, fosters collaboration, and supports a culture where teachers learn from each other's strengths.

“Having time with [experienced teacher] is really boosting your morale as well.”

**OVERSEAS TRAINED TEACHER.**

### Real-life example: Supportive observation and open dialogue

At one school we visited, leaders are intentional about creating a culture where classroom observations are seen as a tool for growth. This helps teachers understand that observations and monitoring are designed to support their development as professionals, not to catch them out.

This approach is part of a purposefully-built culture of trust, openness, and collaboration between school staff. We heard from teachers that they feel safe and confident to try new strategies, ask for feedback from colleagues, and share what is and isn't working with leaders. Leaders reinforce this by engaging in reflective conversations and inviting frank feedback about PLD processes and challenges. Leaders emphasised that the school promotes 'shared responsibility' for the success of teachers' learning and for the impact it has on student outcomes.

### Reflective questions

- Thinking about recent PLD efforts - have these had the impact we thought they would? If not, why not?
- How well do we clarify to teachers where adaptations to PLD can and cannot be made? How can we be sure that they understand?
- What changes are we seeing in student engagement, achievement, or well-being as a result of PLD?
- How might we help the school board and school community understand what PLD we are focused on, what changes they can expect to teacher practice, and the value this will have for students?
- Do we regularly follow up to revisit and recap new learning? Are teachers supported to use new tools, strategies, and techniques?
- In what ways do we monitor and evaluate the embedding of PLD to ensure it is having the intended impact?
- How can we create space for honest feedback from teachers about PLD?
- How do we support newly-hired teachers who have not received the same PLD as their colleagues? Would it be useful to update our induction process to ensure coverage of key PLD learning?



## Conclusion

---

Effective PLD is a critical part of ensuring teachers can make a difference for students.

---

In New Zealand, we invest substantially in teacher development, and we can do better to make sure teachers and students are seeing the benefit of this investment. School leaders play a key role in supporting this, so that what teachers learn from PLD is well-designed, well-selected, and well-embedded. The Good Practice Framework provides guidance on what works, as informed by national and international evidence, to support better decision-making for teachers' PLD.





## Useful resources

What is it?	Link
<b>Report:</b> Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?	<a href="#">Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?</a>
ERO's <b>Teaching Observation Framework</b> (TOF) describes what effective teaching practice looks like at a classroom level, based on robust evidence.	<a href="https://ero.govt.nz">Teaching observation framework (https://ero.govt.nz)</a>
An accessible <b>summary of international education evidence</b> on what has been the impact of different approaches when they have been used in schools.	<a href="https://evidence.ero.govt.nz">International evidence toolkit (https://evidence.ero.govt.nz)</a>
The Education Endowment Foundation's 2024 <b>guide to effectively implementing PLD</b> in schools.	<a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.nz">A school's guide to implementation (https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.nz)</a>
A short guide from the Education Endowment Foundation to help educators in understanding, evaluating, and <b>applying research evidence in practice</b> .	<a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.nz">Using research evidence (https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.nz)</a>
A Teaching Council initiative with resources to support all teachers to grow <b>their leadership capability</b> , grounded in the values of the teaching profession.	<a href="https://teachingcouncil.nz">Leadership resources (https://teachingcouncil.nz)</a>

What is it?	Link
<b>Leadership Capability Framework</b> developed by NZCER for the Teaching Council, this framework outlines the core capabilities needed for effective educational leadership.	<a href="https://teachingcouncil.nz">Leadership capability framework (https://teachingcouncil.nz)</a>
A Ministry of Education resource offering practical guidance for schools to support <b>teachers' PLD around dyslexia and literacy learning</b> .	<a href="https://inclusive.tki.org.nz">Support teacher PLD (https://inclusive.tki.org.nz)</a>
A 2011 <b>resource from the Post-Primary Teachers' Association</b> offering templates, audit tools, and practical guidance to help schools review and improve their PLD systems.	<a href="https://ppta.org.nz">Professional learning and development toolkit (https://ppta.org.nz)</a>
PLD to support teachers in using <b>structured literacy and te reo matatini</b> approaches.	<a href="https://pld.education.govt.nz">PLD for structured literacy &amp; te reo matatini approaches (https://pld.education.govt.nz)</a>
A Ministry of Education page outlining how schools can access PLD to improve outcomes for <b>priority learners</b> . Includes guidance on school-initiated supports and system-level priorities.	<a href="https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz">Professional learning and development (https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz)</a>

For references, please refer to the full report [Teaching our teachers: How effective is professional learning and development?](#)



EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE  
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

# Teachers' PLD:

## Making sure it's worth it

ERO looked at PLD that shifts teacher practice. This Good Practice Framework tool supports school leaders to make good decisions around PLD for teachers – to make sure it's worth it.

To be effective, PLD needs to be...

### 1 Well-designed

**Well-designed PLD needs to:**

**Build teachers' knowledge**

- Pace and time PLD to provide the right learning at the right time
- Draw on expertise, from within the school and externally
- Support with practical supports like observations and meetings

**Help teachers develop teaching techniques**

- Provide clear, step-by-step guidance for a variety of techniques
- Use instruction, modelling, rehearsal, and feedback
- Include group activities, discussions, and collaborative tasks

**Give teachers the tools to take what they have learnt and use it**

- Provide tools that can be applied immediately in the classroom
- Ready-to-use tools might include prompts, props, scripts, assessment framework exemplars, or learning activity examples

**Motivate teachers to use what they have learnt**

- Share the purpose of PLD, how it is relevant, and credible evidence that it will lead to improved student outcomes.
- Keep up momentum with goals, support, and encouragement

### 2 Well-selected

**Well-selected PLD needs to:**

**Be relevant to school, student, and teacher needs**

- Align PLD to strategic priorities – for the school, teachers, and students
- Consider fit and relevance to the school's context
- Manage within time and resource constraints

**Focus on student outcomes**

- Use student data to drive decisions about where to focus
- Take into account national and system-level priorities
- Look for evidence that PLD can shift student outcomes

**Be credible and evidence-based**

- PLD delivery (methods, facilitators) is credible and evidence-based
- PLD content (programmes, topics) is credible and evidence-based

### 3 Well-embedded

**When PLD is well-embedded:**

**Teachers are expected and supported to use what they have learnt**

- Plan ahead how teachers will be supported to embed new learning into the classroom
- Use plans, processes, and professional supports to keep momentum
- Prioritise preventing a return to business as usual through goals, meetings, observations, feedback, policies, and inductions for new staff

**Teachers are clear about where adaptations can be made, or not**

- Be explicit about where teachers can tweak practices to respond to student needs
- Be explicit about what needs to be followed exactly

**Effectiveness of any changes is monitored**

- Assess evidence of changes to teacher practice and student outcomes
- Affirm and reinforce improvements – and celebrate success

Scan me!



**More info:**

Want more detail, including evidence-based strategies and stories? Check out our full Good Practice Framework guide here at [evidence.ero.govt.nz](https://evidence.ero.govt.nz)



**EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE**  
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

[www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz)



**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

---

**School leaders' good practice: Professional learning and development**

Published 2025

© Crown Copyright

Digital: 978-1-991126-91-7

Print: 978-1-991126-97-9



Except for the Education Review Office's logo used throughout this report, this copyright work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence. In essence, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work to the Education Review Office and abide by the other licence terms. In your attribution, use the wording 'Education Review Office', not the Education Review Office logo or the New Zealand Government logo.