

Evaluation of the Second Trial of Reading and Writing Assessment Papers

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This report summarises the feedback responses of the teachers and students to the asTTle trial literacy assessment papers conducted in October 2000. Feedback was generally positive across both reading and writing and from both teachers and students.

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Approximately three-quarters of the 48 schools provided feedback, though most of the feedback came from teachers at upper (7-10) deciles (47%).

Table 1
Evaluation Responses By School Decile

Decile	No Of Schools	No of Responses		
		Reading	Writing	Total
1	4	4	3	7
2	4	4	4	8
3	2	2	0	2
4	3	2	2	4
5	3	3	11	14
6	2	5	2	7
7	1	5	0	5
9	2	5	6	11
10	11	15	19	34
No decile		3	0	3
TOTAL		34	48	95*

*Plus one respondent who failed to enter the school name or type of test. This response was ignored.

Question 1

Was the content appropriate for the age level and ability of the students?

Reading

58% of the respondents thought that the content was appropriate for the age level and ability of the students. One teacher commented that the content “was well chosen and of general broad subjects”.

Of the 8% who did not think the content was appropriate for the age level and ability of the students only one commented further. She said “No! Because the age level for reading differs across the board”.

Of the 31% of teachers that gave a mixed response, one thought that it was above the level of her children, but the pupils thought it

In October 2000, trial assessment papers for reading and writing were distributed to 48 volunteer schools. Students at each school completed either a reading or writing paper. Teachers who administered the papers were asked to complete a feedback evaluation form. The form asked six questions designed to elicit information useful in revising the test papers. This report summarises teacher feedback by questions and by type of test.

In total, 96 teacher evaluation responses were received. Table 1 details the number of schools by decile and the number of responses for both tests. Responses came from schools in the Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Gisborne, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Southland and Thames areas.

was OK. Four teachers thought it was too easy for the more able students, two teachers found that their low ability children found it difficult. Two teachers found that it was too hard at the top end, and two teachers thought that some of the vocabulary was difficult to understand. Two teachers thought it was too easy and one teacher commented that many of her children finished early.

Table 2
Appropriate Content for Age and Ability of Students.

Test	Yes	No	Both	No response	Total
Reading	28	4	15	1	48
Writing	36	3	8	0	47

Writing

77% of teachers responded “yes” to this question. One teacher commented that “the layout of the report writing task was great – clear information and excellent hints”. Another said that “Dictation was clear and they thought it was easy”.

Only 6% thought that the content was not appropriate for the age and level of the children. Two of these respondents thought that the dictation and editing section was too easy and the third thought that the whole test was too easy and that there was too much time allowed.

Of the 17% that gave a mixed response the teachers commented that only parts of the test were appropriate, or it was appropriate to only some of the children.

Question 2

Was the content interesting and engaging for the students?

Reading

73% of respondents answered positively. One teacher commented “Very much so. The extracts were interesting and varied. I liked the graphics – cartoons, diagrams, pictures etc.” Another said that the children “Liked it better than the NZPAT tests. Most found it interesting, as far as tests go.”

Of the three teachers who gave a “no” response, the comments were:

- “Majority said no”.
- “Not in the short time that the children had to sit the test”.
- “Not at all”.

Of the 21% who gave a mixed reaction, the following are some of the comments:

“Children engaged at the beginning and started to lose interest when difficulty increased”.

“A good range though children said they wanted more ‘action’ in the reading

“The students had mixed feelings, though more positive. Generally, yes, but half found it too hard

Table 3
Was the content interesting and engaging?

Test	Yes	No	Both	No response	Total
Reading	35	3	10	0	48
Writing	33	3	10	1	47

Writing

70% of respondents answered “yes” to this question. Positive comments ranged from “interesting, yes, engaging, no” to “reasonably so” and “OK”. One teacher commented, “Seemed to enjoy the article about the whales, might do a letter writing stint to government!”.

Of the 6% who thought the test was neither interesting nor engaging. Their comments were:

- “Not really. Found topic for writing a bit boring”.
- “Need something more interesting, a little boring”
- “Not really. Needs a more New Zealand focus e.g. African elephant. Children have little/no knowledge of this. Why not Kiwis?”

21% gave a mixed response to this question. One teacher found the layout interesting, and the dictation and editing novel, but did not like the content. One class preferred paper 8 to paper 9. Two teachers thought the papers were interesting but not engaging.

Question 3

Were the teacher’s instructions clear and easy to follow?

Reading

81% of teachers responded positively to this question. Of those teachers who commented further four said that the children found them easy to follow, and five teachers commented that they were clear and precise.

The one teacher whose response was classed as a “no” made no other comment except that it took her longer than 10 minutes to give the instructions and check that the children understood what they had to do.

Of the 17% who gave a mixed reaction to this question four teachers commented that the instructions took longer than the allotted 10 minutes to read, two commented that all parts to be read should be shaded, one commented that size and spacing could be improved, and one suggested that the ‘bubbles’ should be put after the year in the student details.

Table 4
Clarity of Teachers instructions

Test	Yes	No	Both	No response	Total
Reading	39	1	8	0	48
Writing	38	4	5	0	47

Writing

81% of the responses were “yes” with some teachers either adding to the “yes” or replacing it with words such as “very”, “extremely”. One teacher commented “Excellent instructure [sic], clear and easy to understand”.

The 9% that responded negatively to this question were as follows:

- Two teachers felt the use of shading on the paper was confusing
- One teacher wasn’t sure just how much input she was supposed to have
- One teacher thought that there should be more direct text for the teachers.

Of the five mixed responses (10%) two teachers felt that it was not necessary to read the editing task, and another teacher also felt that all the text that the teacher should read should be shaded.

Question 4

Was the level of difficulty across the paper appropriate?

Reading

Comments as to the level of difficulty and whether it was appropriate varied. Only 46% thought the level of difficulty was appropriate, 21% did not think it was appropriate and 27% gave a mixed response.

Of the “yes” responses, one teacher commented “I liked the variation in questioning (sic) techniques – multi choice, short answers, matching up etc.”. Most just answered this question with a “yes”.

Of the “no” responses, one teacher said that it seemed to get harder as you went through the paper, while another said that it could have been easier at the beginning and become progressively more difficult. Four teachers thought it was too easy especially at the beginning and that there could have been more challenging questions especially at the end. One teacher thought that papers 7 and 8 were hard because there was a lot of reading.

Ten of the mixed responses thought that the test was good overall but that some of the test levels were inappropriate. Three teachers felt that their more able students found it too easy; five teachers felt that it was too difficult for their less able children. One teacher commented that her students felt that there was a large range of difficulty from one section to another

Table 5
Appropriateness of level of difficulty

Test	Yes	No	Both	No response	Total
Reading	22	10	13	3	48
Writing	30	3	13	1	47

Writing

64% of respondents answered “yes” to this question.

6% answered no to this question as follows:

- “No”
- “No could have been harder to indicate ability of above average Year 7’s”

- “Perhaps a little easy”.

28% gave a mixed response to this question. Six teachers thought sections A & B were too easy, two teachers thought it was too easy for the Year 7's. Only one teacher thought it was too difficult for her low ability students.

Question 5

Is there any other general comment you would like to make about the paper?

Reading

19 teachers responded positively to this question. A summary of their responses follows:

- Clear layout and instructions (5 teachers)
- Good variety of questions and layout (7 teachers)
- Excellent assessment overall (6 teachers)
- Plenty of time allowed (2 teachers)
- Children found introductory part exciting and fun
- 1 teacher appreciated the test papers being different for each child around the table as there was then no copying of answers.

Nine teachers made ‘constructive comments’:

- No assistance for special needs children, or whether they could receive help from their teacher
- Comment on children's age to avoid inconsistencies in placing of children in the classes
- Review some of the vocabulary
- Should make questions progressively more difficult
- Check for errors
- Some practice questions and answers did not apply to the actual test
- Not all children's families, religions, cultures accept the theory of evolution as a fact, and these children are too young to discuss the pro and cons
- Children preferred filling in bubbles or other types of responses to putting “A”, “B” or “C”, which they found confusing
- Not enough time allowed for instructions

Two teachers liked some aspects of the tests but not others:

- “Length of time good. Pictures not very clear. Some questions not clear”
- “Some text pieces were quite lengthy while others were very short”

Two teachers thought the tests were too long. Two teachers thought the tests contained a lot of ambiguous questions. Four teachers were disappointed with the quality of the pictures and the errors in the papers.

Writing

Five respondents made no comment to this question. The most common comment was with regard to the use of dictionaries during editing, 12 respondents either asked if this would have been allowed or commented that there were no instructions as to the use of a dictionary, and so they had allowed it as it was normal practice in class.

Positive comments came from six respondents, with comments such as, “Well set out, easy to read and with clear instructions”, “Appropriate length, interesting context and the students liked completing it”.

Three respondents commented that there was not enough space for story planning or the story, and five commented that the time allowance for planning/writing was too long.

Question 6

What was the student's response to the paper?

Reading

An extremely wide range of responses from “Awesome! Cool! Want More” to “boring”. Approximately 101 responses and of these 62 could be said to be positive as follows:

- “Positive” (12 responses)
- “Enjoyed it” (5), “challenging” (3), “fun”, “good”, “loved it”, “do it again!”, “just right”, “pretty cool”.
- “Good range of questions” (4), “interesting” (4), “Range of difficulty Ok” (2), “easy to follow” (2), “time adequate” (2), “quite good”, “OK” (2), “layout good”, “fair”, “preferred it to PAT” (2), “like PAT's”, “easy”

Of the remaining 39 responses, three found the test too difficult, ten found it difficult to understand in part or whole, six found it too easy, two teachers commented that they had a range of responses from too hard to too easy.

Four respondents gave negative responses such as “did not enjoy” or “boring”

Comments made with regard to the physical aspects of the tests were as follows:

- Two students liked the bubbles, while two did not
- Not enough space for answers
- Too much reading/writing (4 responses)
- Not imaginative enough
- Some pictures were unclear

Writing

By far the majority of the responses from students were positive (34) with comments like “cool”, “good” and “OK”. Four groups thought it was easy to follow and well set out, and teachers commented that students were “focussed and interested” and “totally engaged”. Five students/classes found the planning and writing section too long and felt that the topic limited the time they could spend writing. Four groups thought the dictation/editing section was too easy. Three groups thought it was boring and the teachers of three groups made comment that they children felt negative about it because it was “just another exam”.

Conclusion

As was found in the evaluation of the first trial, these trial materials have been received positively across the country.