

Achievement in the arts

Summary of results from the 2015 National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement for teachers and principals



Purpose

The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) is designed to assess and understand student achievement across the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) at Year 4 and Year 8 in English-medium state schools.

What we assessed

In 2015 we assessed achievement across the arts in Years 4 and 8 using nationally representative samples of students from 100 schools at each year level. We used two main approaches to assess achievement.

- Up to 27 students in each school completed an assessment made up of tasks related to dance, drama, music and visual arts called *The Nature of the Arts (NoTA)* assessment. The tasks, which were mainly presented by computer, covered three strands of the arts learning area: understanding the arts in context, developing practical knowledge in the arts, and interpreting in the arts.
- Teachers in each school made best-fit judgements for up to 12 students in either dance, drama, music or visual arts. To make their judgements teachers used one of four ratings frameworks specially prepared for the NMSSA study. The frameworks covered two strands of the arts learning area: developing ideas in the arts and communicating in the arts. Twenty-five schools were selected to assess each discipline at each year level using the appropriate framework.

NoTA assessment scores were located on the NoTA measurement scale (see graph top right). Scores from the performance ratings frameworks were located on separate scales for dance, drama, music and visual arts (see table at the top of page 6). A curriculum alignment exercise using a panel of experts was used to define the minimum scores on each scale that indicated students were, on balance, meeting the achievement objectives at each of curriculum levels 2 to 4.

Students, teachers and principals also responded to questionnaires to provide contextual information.

Key findings from the NoTA assessment

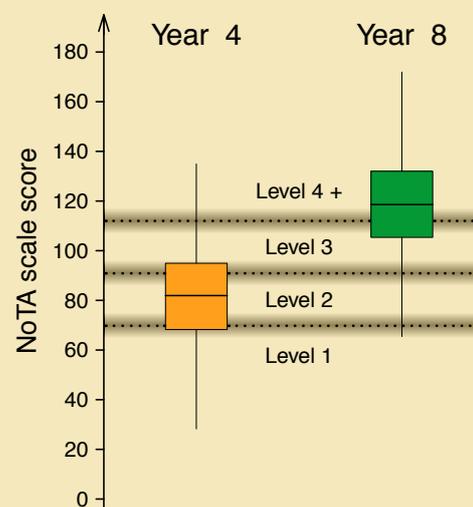
- Percentage of students achieving at or above expected curriculum levels using NoTA

Year level and curriculum level	All students %	Māori students %	Pasifika students %	Students with SEN*
Year 4, level 2 and above	72	61	65	50
Year 8, level 4 and above	63	48	50	36

* students with special education needs

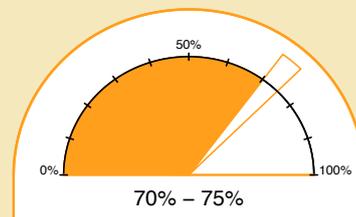
- On average, students made about 9 NoTA units of 'progress' per year between Year 4 and Year 8.
- Girls scored, on average, 9–10 NoTA units higher than boys at both year levels.
- Students from decile 1, 2 and 3 schools scored 16 NoTA units lower, on average, than those who attended decile 8, 9 and 10 schools.

Distribution of scores on the Nature of the Arts (NoTA) scale

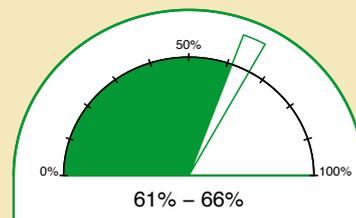


Note: The blurred lines show the boundaries between curriculum levels. The lines are blurred to indicate the margin of error associated with defining boundaries.

Percentage of Year 4 students achieving at curriculum level 2 and above



Percentage of Year 8 students achieving at curriculum level 4 and above



Note: The unshaded 'fan' on each dial is used to show the margin of error associated with the percentage reported.

DANCE: Example items

A. Nature of the Arts: Hip Hop *

Students were shown a media clip of a Hip Hop dance performance. This dance item assessed understanding the arts in context.



Name three things that make this dance style Hip Hop.

Scoring category	Examples of student responses	Year 4 %	Year 8 %
Inappropriate response or student is unable to respond	"I don't know"	11	2
Identifies one or two different things specific to Hip Hop	"Dancers wear street clothes" "It has lots of footwork" "They dance to hip hop music" "Dancers show attitude" "They move in unison"	70	46
Identifies three different things specific to Hip Hop	(From the list above)	19	52

B. Performance ratings framework in Dance: Show and perform dance to an audience

Teachers rated students' performance on four aspects: Explore and create dance, Show and perform dance to an audience (see below), Explore, create and show dance with music, and Talk about own or others' dance work.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Students at this step:			
Can show learned movement sequences or dances to a 'public' audience, with teacher support (e.g. teacher may be placing students and calling out instructions).	Can show learned movement sequences or dances to a 'public' audience with controlled entrances, placement and movement about the space and exits (e.g. teacher may be prompting with occasional instructions).	Can show memory of movements, good concentration and commitment to perform to a 'public' audience with awareness of performance demands (e.g. hold still while others are dancing).	Can show sustained memory of movements, confidence, commitment and appropriate expression throughout the performance (e.g. show strong, controlled energy and purpose throughout the haka).

Year	Step 1 %	Step 2 %	Step 3 %	Step 4 %
4	17	31	40	12
8	7	22	38	33

*For more examples of assessment items and performance rating frameworks see the Key Findings report for the arts and the discipline reports in dance, drama, music and visual arts. These reports can be found at <http://nmssa.otago.ac.nz>.

DRAMA: Example items

A. Nature of the Arts: *Māui and the Sun*

On the computer students saw some media clips showing students working in drama to tell the story of *Māui and the Sun*. This drama item assessed developing practical knowledge in the arts and interpreting in the arts.



How does putting Māui's brother in the 'hot seat' help you to find out more about the story?

Scoring category	Examples of student responses	Year 4 %	Year 8 %
Inappropriate response or student is unable to respond	"To talk about the story" "A child sat on the chair"	44	17
Basic description about why the process of hot-seating might have been used	"You can ask the character questions" "The questions are about the story" "The questions are answered"	45	41
Describes and gives examples about why the process of hot-seating might have been used (the outcome of hot-seating)	"You can find out things that weren't in the story like how they felt" "It tells us what they thought and what they did"	11	42

B. Performance ratings framework in Drama: *Working in role*

Teachers rated students' performance on four aspects: Working in role (see below), Developing role outside the dramatic action, Making drama, and Talking about role in drama.

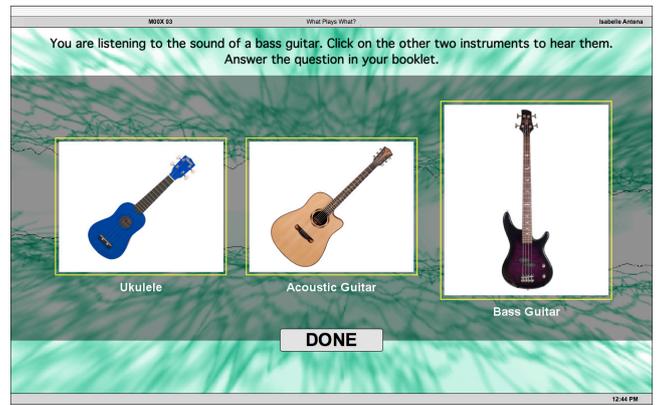
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Working in role: This aspect is about students' ability to work in role, 'as if they are someone else'.			
<i>Students at this step:</i>			
Can work in role in familiar contexts for short spaces of time with teacher guidance and encouragement. The student knows when they and others are in and out of role.	Can work in role (in a blanket or group role) in a drama with teacher guidance. The student takes part appropriately in role responding with their own opinions, feelings and characteristics.	Can sustain a group role, developing the drama and working to a conclusion. They respond in role appropriately throughout the drama.	Can initiate ideas to develop a believable role within a drama. This may be individually or within a small group.

Year	Step 1 %	Step 2 %	Step 3 %	Step 4 %
4	35	43	18	4
8	9	32	27	32

MUSIC: Example items

A. Nature of the Arts: *What Plays What?*

On the computer students saw pictures of three musical instruments. They heard the sound of each of these instruments playing. This music item assessed developing practical knowledge in the arts.



What is different about the sound of a bass guitar from the other two instruments (ukulele and acoustic guitar)? Try to give two differences.

Scoring category	Example of student response	Year 4 %	Year 8 %
Inappropriate response, appearance of instrument described which has no link to the sound or student is unable to respond	"It's louder" "It is a different shape"	53	15
One valid reason	"It has a low sound" "It's electric" "It can be plucked or picked" "It's for playing notes not chords" "The strings are thicker and longer so the sound is lower" "It makes a staccato sound"	44	60
Two valid reasons	(From the list above)	3	25

B. Performance ratings framework in Music: *Singing – sing in tune*

Teachers rated students' performance on four aspects: Singing, Playing, Responding, and Creating, reading and recording. Each aspect was broken down into a number of sub-aspects (see Sing in tune from the Singing aspect below).

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Singing: Vocal learning - using voice; vocal techniques, musicianship, performance of own and others' music in a range of styles, forms, and genres.			
Sing in Tune			
Cannot match pitch (drones).	Match pitch over a small range (5 - 6 notes) (e.g. echo songs).	Reliably match pitch over an octave (e.g. C to C).	Sing more complex songs in tune (e.g. Can You Feel the Love Tonight).

Year	Step 1 %	Step 2 %	Step 3 %	Step 4 %
4	26	50	19	5
8	22	30	29	19

VISUAL ARTS: Example items

A. Nature of the Arts: *White LEGO*

Students watched a media clip that showed an artwork called 'The Cubic Structural Evolution Project' by Olafur Eliasson. This visual arts item assessed developing practical knowledge in the arts.



What are two interesting things you notice about the making of this artwork?

Scoring category	Example of student response	Year 4 %	Year 8 %
Inappropriate response or student is unable to respond	"I don't know"	12	4
Simple literal observation about the process	"It's made of white LEGO and there are a variety of shapes like tall buildings because it is a city"	74	54
Deeper understanding of the process	"The artwork can change because you can take it apart and rebuild it" (time-based aspect emphasised) "Adults and children participated in building it" (collaborative aspect emphasised)	14	42

B. Performance ratings framework in Visual Arts: *Thinking*

Teachers rated students' performance on three aspects: Doing, Thinking (see below), and Looking, talking and knowledge.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Thinking: Children draw, talk, explore to think visually.			
<i>Students at this step:</i>			
Begin to draw to explore ideas using their personal experience and their imagination. Talking and looking supports their thinking.	Use drawing and discussion to investigate, invent and develop ideas based on observation, personal experience and imagination.	Use drawing to investigate, invent and develop ideas based on observation, personal experience and imagination. They demonstrate a facility to play with and communicate visual ideas supported by a study of artworks.	Use drawing to extend, sustain and revisit ideas based on observation, personal experience and imagination. They demonstrate a facility to play with, refine and communicate complex ideas.
Examples			
<p><i>This could be:</i> children talking and drawing together; looking at picture books and responding to images as well as story; children find opportunities to draw with any art material to tell their story.</p>	<p><i>This could be:</i> drawing to develop ideas in an artist's notebook; quick on-site drawing to capture ideas about the world; playing with ideas by collaborative drawing/painting.</p>	<p><i>This could be:</i> children being 'art detectives' and finding out about how other artists play with visual ideas; inventing ways of working with art materials.</p>	<p><i>This could be:</i> a series of drawings to develop character or image in drawing books; revisiting an artwork with a different media to develop ideas; making links between their artworks and the work of other artists - with image or media or ideas.</p>

Year	Step 1 %	Step 2 %	Step 3 %	Step 4 %
4	8	66	17	9
8	7	13	36	44

Key findings from the performance ratings

Percentage of students achieving at or above expected curriculum levels using performance ratings made by teachers

Year level and curriculum level	Performance in Dance %	Performance in Drama %	Performance in Music %	Performance in Visual Arts %
Year 4, level 2 and above	73	51	48	82
Year 8, level 4 and above	68	51	53	66

- On average, girls scored higher than boys in each discipline and at each year level.

Attitudes to the arts disciplines

- Overall, students had positive attitudes about each discipline.
- Year 4 students were more positive than Year 8 students about dance, music and especially visual arts.
- Girls, on average, were more positive than boys about each discipline.
- Pasifika students, on average, were more positive than non-Pasifika students about each discipline.
- At Year 8, students in each discipline who had positive attitudes also tended to have higher performance ratings. At Year 4 this was only true for dance.

Teachers

- In general, teachers reported they were more confident about teaching visual arts than the other disciplines.
- There were more specialist teachers at Year 8 than Year 4.
- For each discipline between 9 and 30 percent of teachers indicated that they had received PLD within the last year; the majority rated it as having a moderate or large impact on their teaching.
- Year 8 teachers were more likely to have had PLD than Year 4 teachers.
- PLD was most common in visual arts and least common in dance.

Regular school-wide arts activities available to students

- At both year levels, the vast majority of schools offered kapa haka, performance events, singing and instrumental groups.

Percentage of principals listing regular school-wide arts activities available to their students

Arts activity	Year 4 %	Year 8 %	Examples
Kapa haka	91	93	Including pōwhiri, whaikōrero
Performance event	82	92	School production, school concert, talent quests, band quest
Singing	83	86	Choir, carol singing, vocal groups, glee club
Instrumental group	71	76	Rock/bands, chamber group, orchestra, classes/bands in ukulele, guitar, recorder, keyboard, violin, drums
Visual arts	39	39	Art classes/extension (gifted), art gallery, art exhibition, wearable arts/trash to flash
Dance	32	47	Hip hop, jump jam dance, modern dance, dance groups/lessons, dance splash/sport
Cultural	26	32	Festivals, performance groups, Polyfest, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Pacific groups, Cook Island drumming
Drama	22	26	Theatre clubs/sports, drama and speech clubs/classes, movie/video making

Questions for teachers, principals and curriculum leaders

- What are the strengths of your current arts programme?
- Are there areas of your arts programme that you would like to develop further?
- How do you assess knowledge and performance in the arts?
- Which arts disciplines do your students enjoy the most/least? Why might that be?