MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Research and Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs

Final Report – March 2010

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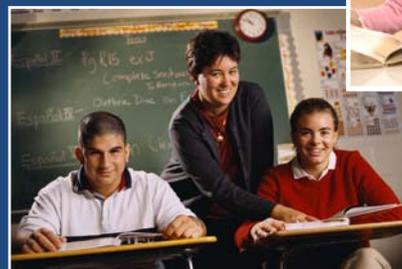
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with any evaluation, there is always a concerted effort from those involved to describe, explain and assess their practice. These educators, who explore new or existing initiatives as part of their day-to-day practice, take the risks and the time to explore their specific role within a bigger policy backdrop. Taking time to support the evaluation creates an added dimension to the work of educators, and we appreciate the insights, comments, energy and commitment given to those who contributed to the understandings in the evaluation.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge the time given by teachers, teacher-aides, Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEITs) and the professional development providers.

Our thanks also go to Virginia Neal, Research Assistant, for her support in the organization and data collection; to Philippa Butler, Research Officer for data entry, and to Janet Lowe for the administration support.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Research and Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs* was conducted over a three-year period (2007-2009). The purpose of the evaluation was to evaluate the development of exemplars, evaluate the introduction of professional development and learning for teachers in the use of learning stories and collect baseline data on current assessment practices used in primary and secondary schools for students with high and very high needs.

During the first year of the evaluation, formative evaluation focussed on the development of the narrative exemplars and a Teachers' Guide book. This early development work was undertaken in Christchurch with local primary, intermediate and secondary teachers supported by a team from the University of Canterbury. The evaluation jointly established a set of criteria for this development and evaluation, and provided feedback on the two resources: Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers and a series of 23 exemplars (88 learning stories) across the primary, intermediate and secondary school sectors (Bourke, Mentis, Poskitt & Todd, April 2008).

Alongside this formative evaluation of the exemplars, a national survey was used to explore the assessment practices used with students with high and very high needs. A 29-item questionnaire was sent to all New Zealand primary and secondary schools, including special schools with a response rate of 964 teachers (67.5% primary; 7.4% intermediate; 16.6% secondary and 7.5% special schools). The results of this survey were reported in an earlier report (Bourke & Mentis, November, 2008) and highlighted that teachers were using over 24 assessment tools. The most used forms of assessment for students with high and very high needs were: collecting examples of work (910 teachers), observations (910 teachers), anecdotal records (851 teachers), portfolios (770 teachers), checklists (744 teachers), interviews (727 teachers) and running records (715 teachers).

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The overall evaluation consisted of a range of approaches, including both qualitative and quantitative analysis. This report also includes the third phase of the evaluation which focuses on the introduction of professional development and learning for teachers in the use of learning stories. Results shown in the early reports, and data within this current report, highlight the need to link exemplars, learning stories and narrative assessment to the curriculum, and point out the challenges for teacher-aides and parents who are not familiar with The New Zealand Curriculum. Across the reports, the issue of 'time' for educators to fully participate in PD and to implement learning stories within the classroom emerged as a barrier to their introduction. Implicit in the learning stories is the requirement that the narrator is a skilled observer, and this report identifies potential issues for teacher-aides who, when writing learning stories, do not have the teaching or pedagogical skills to narrate observations in an analytical and assessment paradigm. They tend to be 'story telling', rather than introducing components of assessment and teaching as inquiry or identifying student need for learning next steps.

The use of Cultural Historical Activity Systems (CHAT) framework was used to explore narrative assessment in terms of the tensions, conflicts and meanings of the roles for those participating (e.g., teachers, teacher-aides, PD providers and Special Education Itinerant Teachers). In part, this framework helped to understand why difficulty arose in the implementation phase, and how 'systems level analysis' enabled an increased understanding of the complexity of assessment within a classroom context. The general level of learning stories developed in the field did not match those outlined in the exemplars as there was little evidence to show that the learning story or string of learning stories met all the criteria for effective learning stories. Understanding how the development and implementation played out, created ways to understand, rather than to apportion blame for effective teaching learning and subsequent student assessment. The report recommends that narrative assessment has potential to enhance and support student learning but the implementation requires further refining in a school context, with classroom-based teachers actively participating in the process as part of their pedagogical repertoire, rather than handing it back to the teacher-aide or visiting specialist to undertake. More specifically, narrative assessment is of most use when linked explicitly to the curriculum and with clear identification of both student achievement, as well as need for further learning (i.e., goals).

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1. INTRODUCTION

When assessing students with high and very high needs within educational settings, it is often difficult to find suitable valid, reliable and authentic assessment tools. In addition to being a complex process for educators, parents and specialists alike to discern ongoing learning outcomes, the learners themselves have not been traditionally part of this process. The assessments have not traditionally had explicit links to the New Zealand Curriculum. The initiative under evaluation is the Ministry's endeavour to address these issues, and to link the assessment and learning more closely to The New Zealand Curriculum, the learning objectives and the key competencies.

This is the final report of the three-year evaluation (2007-2009) of the development and implementation of the *Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs*. In 2007, the Ministry of Education contracted Massey University to provide formative evaluation on the development of assessment exemplars followed by the evaluation of the professional development and early implementation of the work into schools in one region.

In April 2008, we reported on the evaluation of the *Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers* and the developed series of 23 Exemplars (88 Learning stories) across primary, intermediate and secondary sectors. In the subsequent report (November 2008), results from a national questionnaire from 964 respondents (primary, secondary and special school teachers) were reported.

The narrative assessment exemplars contain samples of student work gathered in authentic learning and teaching contexts by teachers, teacher-aides, specialists and parents; samples that are annotated in order to illustrate learning and achievement against learning areas and the key competencies. The quality of the sample is described and analysed against the criteria associated with the achievement objective, often through reference to matrices that provide the framework for 'progression' of learning processes and content. It was anticipated that the curriculum exemplars would provide a systematic and detailed framework to demonstrate learning for students with high and very high needs against level 1 of the New Zealand Curriculum.

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The aim of curriculum exemplars was in part to assist teachers in formative assessment practice, through examining the quality and level of the student work and guiding teachers and students with next step learning, and in part to link learning more closely with the New Zealand Curriculum. Such information would then be used to help teachers make decisions about their own teaching in relation to the student, and to inform ongoing learning for that student.

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> *In earlier research, the use of learning stories is linked to increased involvement of teachers, teacher-aides, parents and students in the assessment process, and a mechanism for greater empowerment and self-determination in the learning process (Cullen, Williamson, & Lepper, 2005).*
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The narrative assessment approach was developed in the early childhood sector (Carr, 2001) to portray 'learning stories' of learning in the day-to-day contexts of the learner. Narrative assessment and the use of learning stories as an assessment approach has also been used with young children with special educational needs (Dunn, 2000), although not at school level. In theory, narrative assessment moves away from a developmental perspective to a sociocultural perspective where the environment, peers, teachers and parents are integral to the assessment process, and where the assessment is premised on the belief that context makes a difference to student learning and assessment results, and that there is not a linear progression to child development. For learners with high and very high needs, this approach is critical, given that developmental stages are unpredictable, and often irrelevant to their learning needs. Assessment that values the learning potential of the individual and that identifies, in real terms, what the child can do, holds value in terms of reliably supporting further learning outcomes. In contrast, a deficit approach, often identified through normative measures, may provide insight into what a child is not capable of, but it does not provide a systematic pedagogical support for maximising further learning.

In earlier research, the use of learning stories is linked to increased involvement of teachers, teacher-aides, parents and students in the assessment process, and a mechanism for greater empowerment and self-determination in the learning process (Cullen, Williamson, & Lepper, 2005). The results from this evaluation suggests that the involvement of teachers was not as high an intended, and that it was largely driven either through the teacher-aides, or the Specialist Education Itinerant Teachers (SEITs).

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This initiative set out to develop and support teachers to implement curriculum exemplars for students with high and very high needs operating at level 1 of the curriculum. As specifically targeted exemplars, these were developed in authentic contexts with young people with high and very high needs, by their teachers, teacher-aides and parents, and students themselves, to demonstrate ways to identify and support learning across contexts. The implementation phase involved one region where there were Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEITs) working across a cluster of schools. These SEITs were all based in a special school and then itinerated across special and regular school settings.

The evaluation examined the early developments in primary and secondary schools, and special schools, and then followed the PD initiative within one region and involved 13 schools in a case study to ascertain how the integration of narrative assessment unfolded in classrooms. The aims were to:

1. Inform the exemplar development as it progressed including the trialling of exemplar materials.
2. Evaluate the quality and value of the assessment approach as it was trialled in a range of schools.
3. Evaluate the quality and value that the assessment approach can provide when newly introduced to primary and secondary schools, managed in partnership with a trial involving professional development to schools that do not currently use learning stories.

The evaluation covered the three phases (a) The collation of baseline data of current assessment practices used in primary and secondary schools for students with high and very high needs, (b) The exemplar development and (c) The introduction of professional development and learning for teachers in this use of learning stories. Specifically the evaluation:

1. Identified the use of assessment and narrative assessment across schools in New Zealand in relation to students with high and very high needs through a national survey.
2. Provided meaningful feedback to the Ministry on the development of the exemplars.
3. Examined how classroom teachers used narrative assessment and how they analysed and used the data from these assessments.
4. Identified and outlined through observations what aspects of narrative assessment inform learning, inform teacher practice, and inform parent support.

■ **Criteria for the Evaluation**

At the beginning of the project, criteria for successful exemplars (see Table 1) were developed collaboratively by the Canterbury University writing team, the MOE and the Massey University evaluation team. These were then used by (a) the writing development team when developing the exemplars and learning stories and (b) the evaluation team independently, to determine whether the string of learning stories, and the Teachers' Guide met these criteria. These criteria were used in identifying the effectiveness of the features from the exemplars that were subsequently developed through the PD implementation phase (2009).

Table 1: Criteria for Successful Exemplars

Progress - Strengthening learning over time	A string (i.e. a series of assessment and learning narratives) articulates learning and evidence of progress over time.
Authentic powerful learning voice	The learning narratives should be powerful, resonant and empowering for teachers, and lead to reflection and deep thinking about student learning and their teaching.
Learning made explicit and specific	Student learning within curriculum learning areas and key competencies is made explicit and specific through the narrative and supported by other sections, e.g. pedagogy and the ABCD frame.
Teaching as inquiry	Exemplars illustrate teachers' engagement in a cyclical process which clearly indicates their inquiry into the teaching and learning relationship.
Credit based	Exemplars demonstrate a strength-based/credit model approach to learning rather than a focus on disability for students within the specified project target group.
Linked to the curriculum	Exemplars make explicit links to the revised curriculum document, i.e. curriculum learning areas and achievement objectives within Level 1, key competencies, effective pedagogy section.
Student centred assessment	Exemplars identify and assess learning progress that can be described but not readily assessed using tools available such as, e.g. PAT's, Running Records (reading) STAR, NCEA, etc.

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The development of strong, respectful and positive relationships between teachers and learners, between teachers and parents, and between teachers, parents and educational professionals is a critical factor in a successful formative assessment process and such relationships have been shown to be enhanced through the use of learning stories (Cullen, Williamson, & Lepper, 2005). The move away from an expert-model in assessment allows for greater self-determination for the learner, and increases the opportunities and the context for personalising learning.

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Narrative assessment is viewed as being able to increase the involvement of teachers, teacher-aides, parents and students in the assessment process, and provide a mechanism for greater empowerment and self-determination in the learning process (Cullen, Williamson, & Lepper, 2005).

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It is argued that PD programmes in education that effectively support teacher learning are designed to enable teachers to inquire into their own practice (Bourke, McGee, & O'Neill, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006), often stimulated by the need to implement a new Government strategy or policy initiative (Kelly, 2006). In many cases, educators outside of the school (inservice teacher educators, PD providers, critical friends, researchers) support this process. In these contexts, PD providers and inservice teacher-educators constantly find ways of:

- *"Creating intentional and positive professional learning experiences for teachers;*
- *Recognizing the difficulties of instant success;*
- *Acknowledging that learning in an authentic educational environment is complex and ill-defined" (Bourke, McGee & O'Neill, 2008, p. 4).*

When new initiatives are introduced into schools by the Ministry of Education, such as this example of narrative assessment through learning stories, the effect is that while they have the potential to create 'novel' catalysts for change, these are not necessarily viewed as a positive change by the teachers. Within a school system, individual and institutional learning occurs when an initiative can be sustained long-term, and where such changes are platformed on a shared understanding for the rationale and purpose. In addition, an implementation plan that can be readily actioned in the authentic setting of a school is required. As Roth and Lee (2007) have noted, when a new tool or division of labour is introduced into a setting, it creates 'possibilities' for all forms of learning:

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Learning occurs whenever a novel practice, artifact, tool or division of labour at the level of the individual or group within an activity system constitutes a new possibility for others (as resource, form of action to be emulated) leading to an increase in generalized action possibilities and therefore to collective (organizational, societal, cultural) learning (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 205).

Professional development programmes aimed at supporting teachers' use of formative assessment have increasingly focussed on teacher pedagogy and practice (Black & Wiliam, 2006; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). At times, assessments that may be intended or appear to be formative (e.g., interviews) are used in a summative way if the results of these assessments are not used to support further student learning. Our findings from questionnaires to teachers suggested that both the reasons for assessment, and the methods used, are consistent with their aspirations for a formative assessment approach for learners with high needs to allow for learning to be made visible. However, teachers also reported using over 24 assessment tools for students with high and very high needs (Bourke, Mentis and Todd, in press), and arguably do not need another assessment tool.

The premise of 'formative' assessment is that it is defined more by the function it serves rather than the assessment strategy itself.

Therefore, the PD providers, contracted to support PD for teachers in narrative assessment and learning stories, reported low level commitment and interest in participation. In fact, teacher participation rates during the first phase of the PD implementation markedly fell to such a level that specialist teachers and teacher-aides became the subjects of the PD. For those teachers involved, the introduction of a new initiative created a dissonance in the teachers' understanding of what the assessment is, how it differs or is the same as other forms of assessment they use, and how they incorporate it into their current repertoire of assessment practice. According to Black and Wiliam (1998) when changes in teaching practice through formative assessment occur, they do so slowly, and teachers integrating formative assessment into their day-to-day work need to practise "through sustained programmes of professional development and support" (p.15). In addition, this project also points out that for sustained PD programmes to have any relevance for the teachers, they must be able to identify with the object (i.e., learning stories and narrative assessment), and subsequently be motivated to engage with the mediating artifact (professional development, new ways of thinking about assessment). The development of formative assessment practices through the PD is likely to require fundamental changes for teachers.

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To really enable formative assessment to work in classrooms teachers are likely to have to play a different role and function within the classroom and correspondingly, so too do the students. Teachers will in all probability become challenged with regards their views about assessment, and about learning. Even when teachers familiar with and expert at using formative assessment have a new classroom of students who are not used to formative assessment, it seems to be a difficult transition for both teacher and student while 'roles' are adjusted (Webb & Jones, 2009). The phenomenon of 'adjustment' and different role expectations within an activity system has been identified in other teacher PD settings. For example, Davies, Howes, and Farrell (2008) identified tensions for educational psychologists who participated in a PD project aimed at supporting teaches at a systematic level in schools, while their employing bodies wanted them to work at an individual case level. Davies et al. noted that psychologists in their study did not get release time from their casework which was "experienced by the educational psychologists as a contradiction between achieving the object of their joint activities with teachers, and the rules that were laid down for their professional working in schools" (p. 410). In other words, there were incongruencies in this situation between 'object' and 'role' (if systemic work rather than individual intervention is seen as object) and between artifact and role, assuming instead that systemic working versus individual case-work is understood as the artifact.

This analysis of roles and rules as well as subject, object, artifact and outcome within different community contexts provides a valuable framework for understanding the complexity of learning activities. The Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework was used in this evaluation to better articulate the implications of the introduction of changes within schools, and to examine where the difficulties and tensions lay, and how the successes were determined by those involved.

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The evaluation of the process for school-initiated narrative assessment for students with high and very high needs who are achieving within Level 1 of The New Zealand Curriculum was carried out as a three-year project and involved three overlapping and interconnected phases. The first phase involved a national survey to schools where the broader context of assessment and in particular narrative assessment for learners with very high needs was explored. This established the baseline data and sat alongside the next two phases which involved formative and summative evaluation of the exemplars development, an evaluation of the PD and implementation of narrative assessment in the schools. These three phases are illustrated in Figure 1.

PHASE 1 – NATIONAL SURVEY & FIELDWORK

- Survey of current assessment practices for learners with high and very high needs
- Fieldwork in schools using learning stories

PHASE 2 – EXEMPLAR DEVELOPMENT

- Development of shared criteria
- Formative feedback on draft exemplars
- Summative evaluation of exemplars and Teachers' Guide

Criteria for successful exemplars

PHASE 3 – IMPLEMENTATION

Evaluation of narrative assessment PD and implementation in schools

FIELDWORK
2009

Figure 1: Three Phases of the Evaluation

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Phase 1 – A National Survey of Assessment Practices and Regional Fieldwork

Phase 1 involved a national survey to schools to establish baseline data on assessment in general and narrative assessment in particular for learners with high and very high needs. This phase also included an examination of the use of learning stories via fieldwork in three schools. The research methods included a questionnaire for primary, secondary and special schools as well as interviews with six teachers in three schools.

The purpose of the national survey was to establish an understanding of the decisions teachers made when identifying assessment practices for students with high and very high needs. The survey attempted to establish how, when and why teachers chose to use the assessment methods they did. To complement these data, qualitative research approaches were used in three schools to gather case study examples that illustrated the implications for teachers using narrative assessment strategies.

A Teacher Reference Group was established to support the development of the national survey. This group consisted of four teachers representing backgrounds in the primary and secondary sectors, special school, and were in teaching as well as management roles. An internal Peer Review team, consisting of two senior academics, met to internally peer review the work and to support the development of methodologies for Phase 3.

Two copies of a 29-item questionnaire were sent to every primary and secondary school in New Zealand during November 2007. The introduction letter and the information sheet requested that the principal invite teachers who teach students with high and very high needs currently operating a level 1 of the curriculum, to complete the questionnaire and send this back to the researchers in the supplied paid envelope. By February 2008 a total of 964 completed questionnaires were returned. The quantitative data were managed and analysed through SPSS and the qualitative responses and comments through NVIVO 8.

In addition to the national survey, fieldwork was carried out with schools that were already using learning stories as a form of assessment. Six teachers across three primary schools were interviewed in three different geographical areas. The schools were selected through nominations obtained through the GSE electronic newsletter InfoExchange, Education Gazette advertisement, assessment network contacts, assessment professional development

facilitation contract managers and other contacts such as through universities. The schools were identified as those who had some experience of using narrative assessment and learning stories. Two schools were regular primary schools, and the third was a special school. The four teachers from the primary schools were using learning stories for all the learners within their class.

The majority of the national survey respondents were females (88%; 11% males; 1% missing data), and were experienced teachers with nearly 70% having 11 years and over teaching experience (42% had 21+ years teaching experience). Of those respondents who indicated their school type (n=958), responses were largely from primary schools (68%). Other breakdowns included secondary schools (16.1%), intermediate schools (5.3%), special schools (7.3%), area schools (1.3%), correspondence school (1.4%); and other (0.7%).

- **Results of Phase 1**

Results of the national survey indicated that on the whole, teachers assess students to support their learning. The main *reasons* or purposes teachers gave for assessing students with high and very high needs included: to help students with their next step learning (88.8%); to identify students' strengths and weaknesses (76.7%) or the level of students' achievement (71.2%); and to adapt their teaching (69.9%). There was minimal response to the items indicating that assessment took place when the teachers disagreed with either parents' or specialists' assessment, or for comparisons with other students. The data showed that assessments take place sometimes for information to parents (58.3%) and to support applications for funding (51.8%).

Teachers reported that they are confident in assessing students in relation to learning, but not for funding applications, or assistive technology applications. In their day-to-day learning and teaching, teachers reported that they are confident in their ability to assess students with high and very high learning needs (38.1% very confident, 57.6% confident). Teachers' self-reported confidence levels are strong in assessment practices that support them to 'know the student' and 'prepare for an IEP'. Generally high levels of confidence were also reported in relation to providing feedback to parents, identifying learning and teaching opportunities, and accessing resources. There was less reported confidence in assessing students for assistive technology applications, to access funding and for ORRS applications.

Teachers reported that when they have a learner with high or very high learning needs in their classroom, they (the teacher) require specialist knowledge in teaching (56.9%) and learning (57%).   A minority of teachers believed that they did not need specialist knowledge in teaching (11%) and specialist assessment (12.1%) skills.   Teachers reported that they generally undertake and lead the assessment process.   When identifying who 'usually do' and also, 'should' lead the assessment, the respondents rated, in descending order, teachers, SENCOs, GSE personnel, and then teacher-aides.   However, when combining the percentages of 'sometimes' and 'usually' to the question of who leads the assessment, teachers remain key to undertaking the assessment (94.9%), but are followed by teacher-aides (71.8%), GSE (71.8%), and SENCO (58.7%).   Leading the assessment is still seen as the teacher's role.   Results showed that when combining 'sometimes' and 'usually' for "who *should* lead the assessment", teachers were seen as leading the process (98.7%), followed by GSE personnel (89.8%) and SENCO (82.2%).   Fewer believed teacher-aides should lead this process (65.4%).   This indicates a discrepancy between what teacher-aides are perceived to actually do and should do in terms of leading the assessment for learners with high and very high needs.

The type of assessment methods used for students with high and very high needs was explored with the teachers. To do this, teachers were asked to rate what assessment methods or tools they used, did not use and the reasons for their response.   The twenty-four identified assessment tools or strategies that were included in the questionnaire were chosen in consultation with the Teacher Reference Group and the Ministry of Education.   These assessment tools or strategies included various approaches used by teachers or educational psychologists in schools.   The results showed that the three main assessment methods for learners with high and very high needs were: collecting examples of work (910 teachers) and observations (910 teachers); anecdotal records (851 teachers) and portfolios (770 teachers). These were followed by: checklists (744 teachers); interviews (727 teachers); and running records or reading (715 teachers).   The least used assessment methods were P-levels (57 teachers); ASDAN (92 teachers), and psychometric tests (121 teachers).

Teachers reported that the most useful assessment information was obtained through observations (78.9% of 939 responses), anecdotal records (56.2% of 920 responses), portfolios (51.7% of 916 responses) and checklists (49.6% of 905 responses). Of least use for this group of learners, were standardized norm tests (33.6% of 894 responses), asTTle (37.3% of 858 responses) and PATs (42.8% of 874 responses). The main reason given for

not using an assessment method, was that the 'test was too advanced' for learners with high and very high needs. The tests that were reported as being too advanced for students to participate in included: curriculum based test (95.4%); self-assessment (93.8%); peer assessment (91.7%); PAT (90.5%); running records of reading (87.4%); NZ curriculum exemplars (84.2%); interviews (84.2%); standardized norm tests (81.9%); BURT word reading test (80.1%); and asTTle (71.6%).

The focus of the national survey was on assessment in general for learners with high and very high needs and narrative assessment and learning stories can be situated in this context. The results showed that the majority of teachers did not use learning stories, and only 305 teachers reported using them. For those teachers who did use them, they did so: to assess what the student learned (n=175), to report (n=138), to assess IEP progress (n=118), to plan next teaching steps (n=166) and to identify learning strengths and difficulties (n=173). Even though relatively few teachers used narrative assessment, they did report using strategies that form the basis of this type of assessment, for example, observations (910 teachers), examples of work (910 teachers) and interviews (727 teachers).

The six teachers involved in the fieldwork used learning stories with all children in their class within Years 1 and 2. These teachers highly rated learning stories as a valuable pedagogical tool, and for demonstrated evidence of student learning. In addition, learning stories were used as an effective communication tool for parents. Some of the teachers had used the learning stories as a subsequent springboard for further learning and found that this motivated and raised the self-esteem of the learner. Teachers attributed this to the learner recognizing that the teachers valued them by giving them time, by listening to their views, by describing and recording the learning story, and then showing and discussing the subsequent learning story with them. Findings from both the survey and fieldwork showed evidence of the use of observations and interviewing as strategies for supporting learning. These are the tools to ensure narrative assessment is a rigorous and valid approach to assessment, while remaining meaningful and useful for the learner.

Overall the results of the national survey provided a useful context relating to assessment for learners with high and very high needs, and the fieldwork results highlighted the potential value of using learning stories as a pedagogical tool. Thus the Phase1 findings provided the background for Phase 2 of the project which focused on an evaluation of the exemplars and Teachers' Guide.

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Phase 2 – Exemplar Development

Phase 2 involved both formative and summative evaluation of the exemplars and Teachers' Guide. This Phase involved three aspects: (1) The development of shared criteria for successful exemplars; (2) Formative feedback on six draft exemplars including a meeting and observation day with the Writing team; and (3) Summative evaluation of the final exemplars and Teachers' Guide. The first part of Phase 2 involved developing a shared understanding of the criteria for successful exemplars. To this end, a meeting was held with the Ministry of Education, the Writing team and the Research team with follow-up email and correspondence in order to establish common criteria for effective exemplars.

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> "

▪ Formative evaluation of the exemplars

The second part of Phase 2 involved a meeting and observation day with the Writing team in Christchurch followed by formative feedback on the draft curriculum exemplars developed by the Writing team. The draft exemplars consisted of strings of learning stories for six students. The samples covered gender and age range (6 – 17 years), as well as the Key Competencies of: Participating and Contributing; Thinking; Managing Self; Using Language Symbols and Texts; and Relating to Others. The learning areas covered in the samples included: Health and PE, English, Social Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics. The Teachers' Guide was not submitted with the exemplars, which impacted on the formative evaluation.

General formative feedback included how the sample exemplars: Provided an excellent beginning point; Were an invaluable form of assessment for capturing "The learning moment"; Were learner-focused and located within the learner's authentic context; Effectively integrated assessment, learning and teaching. Formative feedback indicated that the learning stories had the potential to provide teachers with scaffolded support to record, make judgments about learning and provide a context for informing teaching decisions and next steps. Specific feedback and recommendations were given with respect to the structure of the story using the 'wheel' format – which incorporated the key competencies, eight learning areas and effective pedagogies. Suggestions for further development were made according to the criteria for effective exemplars.

- **Summative evaluation of the exemplars**

The summative evaluation of the exemplars provided feedback on the writing development phase and therefore largely focused on two resources: (1) *Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers*. A resource to support The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs (Draft, 2008), and (2) a series of 23 Exemplars (88 Learning stories) across the primary, intermediate and secondary school sectors.

These two resources were evaluated by a team of four researchers (three New Zealand based and one from England). The online component of this work, where the exemplars and Teachers' Guide were accessible through the *Moodle* platform, provided efficient and systematic navigation and enabled the team to work across geographical regions well. The resources were evaluated against the set of shared criteria where each exemplar was evaluated against these criteria to provide a specific and detailed focus and an overall generic chart was developed to distil and integrate this information.

The exemplars, in general, were seen as a tribute to the development team as a starting point to provide positive and informed support to teachers in their professional learning when commencing the process of writing learning stories and using narrative assessment in their classrooms. They were, on the whole, well written and articulated student learning and learning outcomes in situations that other assessments would not be able to capture. While the exemplars targeted a specific group of children, it was felt that in all likelihood teachers in general would find them useful guides and examples of how to approach learning and assessment.

The summative evaluation found that not all exemplars were linked to the curriculum, and some, written by parents, were not linked to pedagogy. However, the evaluation found that incorporating learning stories written by parents was useful too as they depicted the child in a unique way. Student voice was used in some learning stories, which had a powerful effect both for demonstrating the child's level, and for incorporating student views.

The evaluation stressed that implicit in learning stories is the requirement that the narrator be a skilled observer, and able to articulate that observation well. It was suggested that teachers might require additional professional learning and development support in observational and recording skills, alongside the exemplars. The key findings of the summative evaluation across all the exemplars were summarised as follows:

1. *Evidence-based stories:* The string of learning stories needs to be evidence-based and incorporate an explicit analysis of learning. While many of them clearly show student learning and assessment outcomes, some are written as 'stories', which while interesting, are without analysis. When this occurs, and when there is little evidence attached, the stories read as a global statement about an aspect of the student's life, rather than being an assessment or learning tool.

2. *Identity and role of observer/narrator:* The identity and role of the person(s) writing the learning story needs to be apparent. The Teachers' Guide explains why it is important for the narrator or observer to explain their role and relationship with the child. However, in many of the learning stories a first name is provided but not their role. In some cases it was the parent, and in other cases, the teacher. Given that there may be a series of observers over time, with different roles and relationships with the child, their lens is important to acknowledge.

3. *Value of photographs:* The use of photographs and visual depictions of learning provided valuable additional information and illustrations of learning. The photographs provide a context for the story and a strong message of engagement. This was enhanced when more than one photograph was used, depicting a sequence or series illustrating involvement, participation, student work and, in some cases, outcome of the activity. As 'pictures paint a thousand words' the suggestion is to include a sequence and range of photographs of children with others, peers, teachers and parents. Not all learning stories or exemplars made use of photographs and were less effective without them.

4. *Technology support:* While this was not identified in the Teachers' Guide, using technology for learning stories was an issue raised by all six teachers interviewed across three schools. Taking photographs and then using technology to download photographs and embed photographs in text documents are all part of the learning for teachers using narrative assessment. Guidelines relating to accessing cameras, and downloading

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pictures efficiently and effectively formatting these into learning stories could be included in the Teachers' Guide.

5. *Reflective questions:* The audience for the reflective questions needs to be clarified. In some instances the reflective questions are addressed to the reader, in other instances these are teacher or observer reflections on how to progress to the next steps, and in other instances these are directed at the learner. Linked to this is a variance in the clarity and specificity of these reflective questions ranging from the very specific learner focused issues to more generalized questions on pedagogy.

6. *Learning string:* There is variance of the number of stories included in a string in the exemplars and the length of time between stories. In order to show strengthening of learning there should be more than two stories showing learning in different contexts and/or a significant timeframe between stories. The links between these stories should be made explicit to form a meaningful string rather than a collection of standalone stories.

7. *Value of the website:* The website is very well structured with intuitive navigation, is visually appealing and can be updated regularly. There is opportunity to develop the online site further in the future to achieve its full potential, such as hyper-linking terms to definitions or resources, to the curriculum website or to online articles or other resources; using a discussion forum for practitioners to discuss the exemplars and narrative assessment; and using voice-over or digital stories.

8. *Value of the overviews:* Both the wheel and the exemplar overview provide a very valuable summary and integration of the dimensions of the narrative assessment approach. They provide the framework for integrating theory and practice and are well conceived. Recommendations here are to ensure consistency of use and to highlight them both in the Teachers' Guide (only the wheel is presented there) providing examples of how they have been used in the exemplars. The exemplars need to be checked for consistency across the information highlighted on each individual wheel framework and the chart (e.g., Nathan - I'm a regular reader, primary exemplar, has different curriculum areas highlighted on the wheel and the chart).

9. *Analysis:* The learning stories rely on clear, concise and insightful analysis, rather than description and a 'story' on its own. Observational skills are important and rely on an integrated analysis of the data and the learning story. Without such analysis, the description of learning on its own does not extend into an assessment exercise.

10. *Observations:* Observations are key to a successful learning story. The observational skills of the narrator cannot be underestimated. Through the observations, the narrator is making choices about what to note, record and analyse. Therefore, the learning story relies on systematic and detailed observations.

11. *The timeframe is important:* Learning stories need to occur over time to demonstrate progress over days, weeks, months and a year. The timeframe should be identified in the introduction to each string. Some of the strings of learning stories were not connected or linked to each other, and unless this is done, they remain as stand-alone separate stories. The overviews made attempts to integrate them, but it would be more powerful to have the 'next steps' linked into future learning stories to show learning progress over time.

12. *The Guide for Teachers:* The Guide for Teachers has the potential to be a valuable companion to the exemplars, with consideration given to (1) Restructuring the guide foregrounding the practice with practical examples prior to the theoretical overview; (2) Formatting it into a more inviting and manageable document partly by shortening and breaking up continuous text; and (3) Providing clear definition of terms and the application of the framework.

The Teachers' Guide was seen as the basis for a supporting document, but still required some restructuring and rework to enable it to be 'teacher friendly' and accessible. It needs to be a practical guide, and the version presented for the summative evaluation was seen as being too theoretical at that stage of its development. Suggestions for restructuring the guide were provided in the summative evaluation and included: Restructuring the guide so the practical section comes first; breaking up the text; providing guidance and examples of different presentational forms for exemplars; providing ideas/ examples/ guidance on how to work together collaboratively to produce exemplar strings; defining key words and linking to the curriculum.

The main concern with the Teachers' Guide was the extended length of the document. Classroom teachers were unlikely to read this, and the structure needed to be a clearer guide *for* teachers in developing learning stories as part of narrative assessment. The summative evaluation concluded that the Teachers' Guide had the potential to be a valuable companion to the exemplars, if consideration was given to (1) Restructuring the guide foregrounding the practice with practical examples prior to the theoretical overview; (2) Formatting it into a more inviting and manageable document partly by shortening and breaking up continuous text; and (3) Providing clear definition of terms and the application of the framework.

Phase 3 – Implementation

Phase 3 involved an evaluation of the exemplars in practice through professional development in a cluster of schools identified by the Ministry of Education. Multiple teams were involved in this phase of the research and evaluation including: The Ministry of Education; the Writing team; the PD team; and the School teams. Members of the School teams taking part in the PD and implementing learning stories in their schools included SEITs (Special Education Itinerant Teachers), teachers, and teacher-aides. All teams played a role and the relationships within and between teams; both explicit and implicit was reflected in the evaluation of this final phase as outlined in the following sections.

3. METHODOLOGY FOR PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION

Phase 3: evaluation of the narrative assessment PD and implementation in schools focused on the four teams involved in the project. These included: the Ministry of Education; the Writing team; the PD team; and the School teams (including SEITs, teachers and teacher-aides). The links between the different teams and the research methods used for data collection within each team are illustrated in Figure 2.

Ministry of Education

- Combined team meeting
- Meetings/teleconference
- Launch

PD Team

- Combined team meeting
- Interview (pre PD)
- Interview during PD
- PD day observation
- Launch

Writing Team

- Writing day observation
- Combined team meeting
- Launch

Release/launch of the Exemplars and Teachers' Guide

School Teams

- SEITs
- Teachers
- Teacher-aides

- Telephone interviews (pre and during PD)
- Questionnaires (pre and during PD)
- Fieldwork (initial and follow-up school visits)
   - Interviews
    - Documentation analysis

Figure 2: Teams involved in Phase 3 Data Collection

- **Data collection within and between teams**

The data collection during Phase 3 covered the four teams involved in the project as illustrated in Figure 2. Direct and indirect connections existed between the teams and the data gathering reflected this through a combination of combined meetings and individual interviews, observations and documentation analysis.

The first combined meeting occurred at the outset of Phase 3 in Queenstown on March 17th 2009 with members from the Ministry of Education; The Writing team; The PD team and The Research team. The data gathered at this meeting focused on: The role and function of the teams; A progress report of the teams' participation in the project; The challenges of implementing PD and narrative assessment into the schools; and the development of the two resources to support the PD and the implementation phase – namely The New Zealand Curriculum *Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs* and the *Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers*.

The second combined meeting towards the end of Phase 3 was the launch of the resources on October 23rd 2009 in Wellington. The release of the *Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers* and *The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs* was released by the Associate Minister of Education, the Hon Heather Roy, and both the hard copy and online product were presented. The event, hosted by the Ministry of Education, consisted of presentations from: The Ministry of Education; The Writing team including parents and advisors; The PD team; and The Research team. Data gathered at this meeting foregrounded the relationship between and within teams and linked indirectly to the school teams who were the target focus for the product (the teacher guide and exemplar resources), the process (the PD to implement learning stories in the schools) and the evaluation. The Research team's presentation at this meeting consisted of an update of the evaluation to date (See Appendix 11, *Research Team Evaluation Update ppt presentation).*

In addition to the two combined meetings, individual meetings were held with the Ministry of Education and interviews were held with the PD team at the outset and during the implementation phase. Data were also gathered through observations of a Writing team workshop and a PD day. Within the School teams individual interviews were conducted with SEITs, teachers and teacher-aides from a sample of participating schools during field visits of these schools. Samples of learning stories were collected for documentation analysis.

An overview of these data collection methods is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Data Collection for Phase 3

Time-line	Ministry of Education	Writing Team	PD Team	School Teams		
				SEITs	Teachers	Teacher-aides
October 2007	Meetings/ tele-conference	Observation				
December 2008			Interview			
March 2009	Combined team meeting – update					
April 2009	Meetings/ tele-conference		PD day workshop	Telephone interview pre PD		
				Initial questionnaire Cohort 1 SEITs & teachers		
May 2009				Telephone interview post PD		
June 2009			Interview	Fieldwork in schools: interviews with SEITs, teacher and teacher-aide		
September 2009					Initial question Cohort 2	
October 23 2009	Launch of exemplars and Teachers' Guide			Follow-up questionnaire Cohort 1 & 2 SEITs & teachers		
November 2009			Interview	Fieldwork in schools: interviews with SEITs, teacher and teacher-aide		
- Ongoing -	Email, telephone consultation			Documentation analysis		

▪ **Writing Team**

The Writing Team for *The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs* project comprised: Developers from the University of Canterbury; Facilitators and Curriculum Advisors; Teacher-writers who documented their students' learning; and a Project Advisory Group. The project and the resources to support this are described on the Ministry of Education "Inclusive education for all: *through different eyes*" website as follows:

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The project, Assessment for Learners with Special Education Needs, focuses on supporting students who are expected to work long term within level 1 of The New Zealand Curriculum. The project includes development of narrative assessment exemplars, guidance, and resources for use by specialist, resource, and classroom teachers and by providers of specialist education services.

Data gathering relating to the Writing team involved: (1) An observation day; (2) Combined meeting; and (3) Attendance at the launch of the resources. The observation of the writing day workshop occurred at the outset of Phase 1 on 17th October 2007 in Christchurch and the Writing team present included the developers from Education Plus at the University of Canterbury and 16 participant teachers, RTLBs and advisors from primary, secondary and special schools. As reported in *Milestone report 1* this resulted in an initial orientation to the resources that were to support the narrative assessment project and contributed the formative and summative feedback in Phase 2. The combined meeting in Queenstown on March 17th 2009 enabled information sharing about the process of writing and development and the link between development and PD. The launch of the *Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers* and *The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs* signalled the completion of the Writing team's involvement in the project.

▪ Ministry of Education

Consultation with the Ministry of Education involved face-to-face meetings, teleconferences and email correspondence with the Team Leader and the Senior Advisors in Assessment. During the three-year duration of this project, there were a number of changes in the Senior Advisor Assessment position and meetings were held with the five different Senior Advisors between March 2008 – August 2009.

> *Together Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers and The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs will support teachers to identify, broaden, and deepen understandings of what students can do and the progress that they make. These resources will help teachers to focus on what their students' learning looks like when opportunities are maximised and possible learning pathways within The New Zealand Curriculum are identified (Ministry of Education 2009).*

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- **Professional Development Team**

The professional development facilitators were contracted by the Ministry of Education to manage the Professional Development for *The New Zealand Curriculum exemplars for learners with special education* needs project with selected schools in the Auckland region. The PD website described the programme as:

> *One of the purposes of narrative assessment is to provide all of those who directly support the learning of the student (teacher, teacher-aide, special education iterant teacher (SEIT), parents) with a powerful tool to notice, respond to, extend, reflect upon and communicate about, important learning that the student engages in that can easily be otherwise overlooked by more conventional modes of assessment. In Auckland, the SEITs have been seen as the 'conduits' for efficiently introducing narrative assessment for mainstreamed ORRs students, exploring and shaping its application as they work with their ORRs funded students in their mainstream schools.*

> *We have the opportunity to expand the involvement of GSE and main stream schools who have their own specialist teacher in the project through their work with verified students working within level 1 of the national curriculum.*

Data gathering relating to the PD team involved an initial meeting with the Director on December 5th 2008 prior to the start of the PD. This was followed by the combined team meeting on March 17th 2009 in Queenstown and two individual interviews as the PD progressed.

Additional data gathering included documentation analysis and observation of one of the PD days (28th April 2009) at the Kohia Teachers Resource Centre, Auckland. This was the second of five full day PD workshops held over the period of February 2009 – March 2010. This was for 'Cohort 1' participants who were targeted by the Ministry of Education to be part of the project. An additional 'Cohort 2' group of participants, which included self-selected participants, attended a second series of 4 full day workshops from June 2009 to March 2010. These two cohorts of participants were included at staggered periods into the evaluation. The PD seminars were advertised as being suitable for all people involved in the ORRS funded student's learning (i.e. SENCO, teacher, teacher-aide, GSE, principal, parent) and the sessions for cohort 1 and cohort 2 were described as follows:

Table 3: PD Programme for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2

Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Monday 9th February 2009, 9am - 3pm ▪ Outline of the history of the project ▪ Outline of the purpose of narrative assessment ▪ Examination of curriculum exemplars **Tuesday 28th April 2009, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Outline of the purpose and process of the project ▪ Key ideas about effective pedagogy ▪ Key ideas about writing a narrative assessment **Monday 27th July 2009, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Key ideas about self assessment and active reflection ▪ Support for writing a narrative assessment ▪ Perhaps the use of the curriculum exemplars? **Monday 16th November 2009, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Examination of the curriculum exemplars for students with very high needs ▪ Examples of the value of narrative assessment ▪ Perhaps use of the Guide for narrative assessment? **Wednesday 24th March 2010, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Narrative Assessment Symposium ▪ Case studies of the impact of narrative assessment in the Auckland region	**Monday 15th June 2009, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Outline of the purpose and process of the project ▪ Key ideas about effective pedagogy ▪ Key ideas about writing a narrative assessment **Monday 3rd August 2009, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Key ideas about self assessment and active reflection ▪ Support for writing a narrative assessment ▪ Perhaps the use of the curriculum exemplars **Monday 16th November 2009, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Examination of the curriculum exemplars for students with very high needs ▪ Examples of the value of narrative assessment ▪ Perhaps use of the Guide for narrative assessment **Wednesday 24th March 2010, 9am - 3pm** ▪ Narrative Assessment Symposium ▪ Case studies of the impact of narrative assessment in the Auckland region

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- **School Team**

An initial group of schools were identified by the Ministry of Education for inclusion in the project. These schools were targeted as part of the broader initiative where Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEIT) deliver Complex Needs Services to students in special and regular schools. It was intended that SEITs would be the first contact for the PD around narrative assessment and would then work with teachers to implement learning stories with learners with high and very high needs. This group constituted Cohort 1 and consisted of 5 Special Day schools which combined, had links with 13 regular schools in the wider Auckland area. Within these schools 10 SEITs and 13 teachers were originally involved in the project. A second group of participants, Cohort 2, were included mid-way through the project. These included self-selected participants and the PD providers worked directly with the 11 participants in this cohort consisting of both teachers and teacher-aides. During the course of the project one of the Special Schools with links to three regular schools and involving three SEITs and three teachers withdrew from the project.

Data gathering for Cohorts 1 and Cohort 2 of the School Teams involved: telephone interviews (pre and during PD); Questionnaires (pre and during PD); and Fieldwork involving initial and follow-up school visits where interviews and documentation analysis took place.

The process of data gathering involved the following steps:

1. An information letter and consent forms along with pre-questionnaires were sent to all participants in Cohort 1 in April 2009 with return envelopes for consent forms and a request for consent to be interviewed (*See Appendix 1 for Cohort 1 Information Letter, Appendix 2 for Consent Form and Appendix 3a and b for Initial Questionnaires for SEITs and Initial Questionnaires for Teachers*).

2. Pre PD telephone interviews with Cohort 1 SEITs (10 participants) in April 2009 (*See Appendix 4 for Initial Telephone Interview Template).*

3. Post PD telephone interviews with Cohort 1 SEITs (10 participants) in May 2009 (*See Appendix 5 for Follow-up Telephone Interview Template*).

4. Field work in schools with Cohort 1 participants in June 2009 (*See Appendix 6 for Fieldwork Information sheet, Appendix 7 for Fieldwork Consent form and Appendix 8 for Interview Schedules*).

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5. An information letter and consent forms along with pre-questionnaires were sent to all participants in Cohort 2 in September 2009 with return envelopes for consent forms (*See Appendix 7 for Information Letter to Cohort 2 and Appendix 3c for Questionnaire for Cohort 2*).

6. A final information letter and post questionnaires were sent to both Cohorts 1 and 2 in October 2009 (*See Appendix 9 for Final Information Letter for Cohorts 1 & 2 and Appendix 10 for the Follow-up Questionnaire*).

7. Fieldwork in November with Cohorts 1 and 2 participants (*See Appendix 8 for Interview Schedules*).

▪ **Tele-interviews with all the SEITs**

Tele-interviews were conducted prior to the start of PD in April and after the introduction of the PD in May of 2009. (*See Appendix 4 for Initial Telephone Interview Template*). All 10 SEITs from Cohort 1 responded to the following two open-ended questions:

1. What have been the challenges for you in getting started on this project?

    Respondents were further probed to comment on questions relating to: how they came to be involved in this project; what some of the issues or tensions were; who the participants in the particular school context/cluster were; what information was received about the purpose or process of this project; and what some of the barriers and enablers were in this project.

2. What expectations do you have in regard to using narrative assessment in this project?

    Respondents were probed to comment on whether they had previous experience of using narrative assessment or learning stories or knowledge of it being used and if so in what context; as well as their views of using narrative assessment/learning stories with learners with high and very high needs; and the perceived outcomes they were hoping for regarding the use of narrative assessment.

In the follow-up tele-interviews all 10 SIETs responded to the following four open-ended questions (*See Appendix 5 for follow-up telephone interview template*):

1. How did your understanding of Narrative Assessment change as a result of the PD day?

2. From the day, what activity, presentation, person or 'thing', significantly impacted on your understanding of narrative assessment?

3. Do you think your role as a SEIT, in this project, changed at all as a result of the PD day?

4. Do you have any other comments about the day or the project in general?

▪ Questionnaires

Initial questionnaires were sent to all SEITs and teachers participating in the study (n = 34) at the outset of the project. This included SEITs (n = 10) and teachers (n = 13) in Cohort 1 in April and teachers (n = 11) in Cohort 2 in September, and returns (n = 18) were from SEITs (n = 8). The follow-up questionnaire was sent to all Cohort 1 and 2 SEITs and teachers (n = 30) in October 2009, once the participants had engaged with the PD around narrative assessment and had an opportunity to implement the learning stories in the classroom with learners with high and very high needs (See *Appendix 3 for Initial Questionnaire and Appendix 9 for the Follow-up Questionnaire*). Response overall was less that half (n = 9). The questionnaire data can be summarized as follows:

Table 4: Initial and Follow-up Questionnaires

Month	Initial Questionnaire		Follow-up questionnaire	
	Sent	Received	Sent	Received
April 2009	Cohort 1 SEITs (10)	8		
April 2009	Cohort 1 teachers (13)	2		
Sept 2009	Cohort 2 teachers (11)	8		
Oct 2009			Cohort 1 and 2 SEITs and teachers (30)	9
TOTAL	34	18	30	9

▪ Fieldwork – interviews and documentation analysis

The fieldwork in schools took place over two periods: (1) Initial fieldwork was conducted in June 2009 (*See Appendix 6 for Fieldwork Information Sheet, Appendix 7 for Fieldwork Consent Form and Appendix 8 for Interview Schedules*) with participants from Cohort 1; and (2) Follow-up fieldwork was conducted in November with participants from Cohorts 1 and 2.

The participants interviewed in the initial fieldwork in June consisted of six SEITs, two teachers and two teacher-aides. The participants interviewed in the follow-up fieldwork in November included three SEITs from Cohort 1, four teachers from Cohort 2 and one teacher-aide from Cohort 2. This is summarised as follows:

Table 5: Fieldwork with Cohort 1 & 2

	June 2009 Fieldwork			November 2009 Fieldwork			
	SEITs	Teachers	TA	SEITs	Teachers	TA	
Cohort 1	6	2	2	3			Cohort 1
					4	1	Cohort 2

The Interviews schedule (*See Appendix 8 for Interview Schedules*) was semi-structured and initially covered demographic information relating to the respondent such as: years of experience working with special needs; background qualification; prior PD on assessment; and prior PD or special needs. The questions were then structured around the current PD on narrative assessment and the impact of this on the respondent's current teaching and assessment practices. The role between SEIT, teacher and teacher-aide was explored and the perceived strengths and limitations of learning stories as well as the barriers and enablers to implementing narrative assessment in the respondent's school context.

- **Documentation analysis**

During the field-visits to schools, SEITs, teachers and teacher-aides discussed examples of their learning stories. These were collated and analysed according to the criteria for effective learning stories developed in Phase 1 of the research.

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4. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Narrative assessment, in this evaluation, is defined as "an authentic account of student learning in relation to the key competencies, the learning areas, and effective pedagogy in The New Zealand Curriculum" (MOE, 2009, p. 6). The PD for narrative assessment in this project involved complex learning communities, where the perspectives, different roles and orientations of members in these communities can create tensions and contradictions, but through this process, learning occurs.

> *Learning needs to occur in a changing mosaic of interconnected activity systems which are energized by their own inner contradictions (Engeström, 2001, p. 140).*

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"

In such cases as in the current project, where human activity occurs in multiple contexts, but is focussed around a re-formed context for a particular purpose (e.g., The Narrative Assessment PD project), each system needs to be understood in relation to this new context. Activity theory is a useful means to explore these multiple contexts, to understand interactions at both "micro and macro levels" (Leadbetter, 2005, p.18), and to explore changing roles and cultures in action (Webb & Jones, 2009). This approach is based on the view that outcomes arise out of dynamic interactions between a number of different elements within a complex socio-cultural system. These elements include the *subject, object, outcome* and *mediating tools* at the primary level of analysis of the system. At an expanded level of analysis of the activity system—*rules, community* and *division of labour* are analysed.

The use of activity systems help to explore and articulate the transformation of teacher and student roles in a change process such as the PD initiative reported here to introduce a different form of assessment. Such exploration leads to better understanding of how and why contradictions exist, and are often perceived as barriers to school reform. Within this evaluation, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used to explore the results of the Narrative Assessment project overall. Taking into account all phases of the evaluation, this framework enabled a way to determine what factors led to success and where barriers to implementation lay, (Figure 3).

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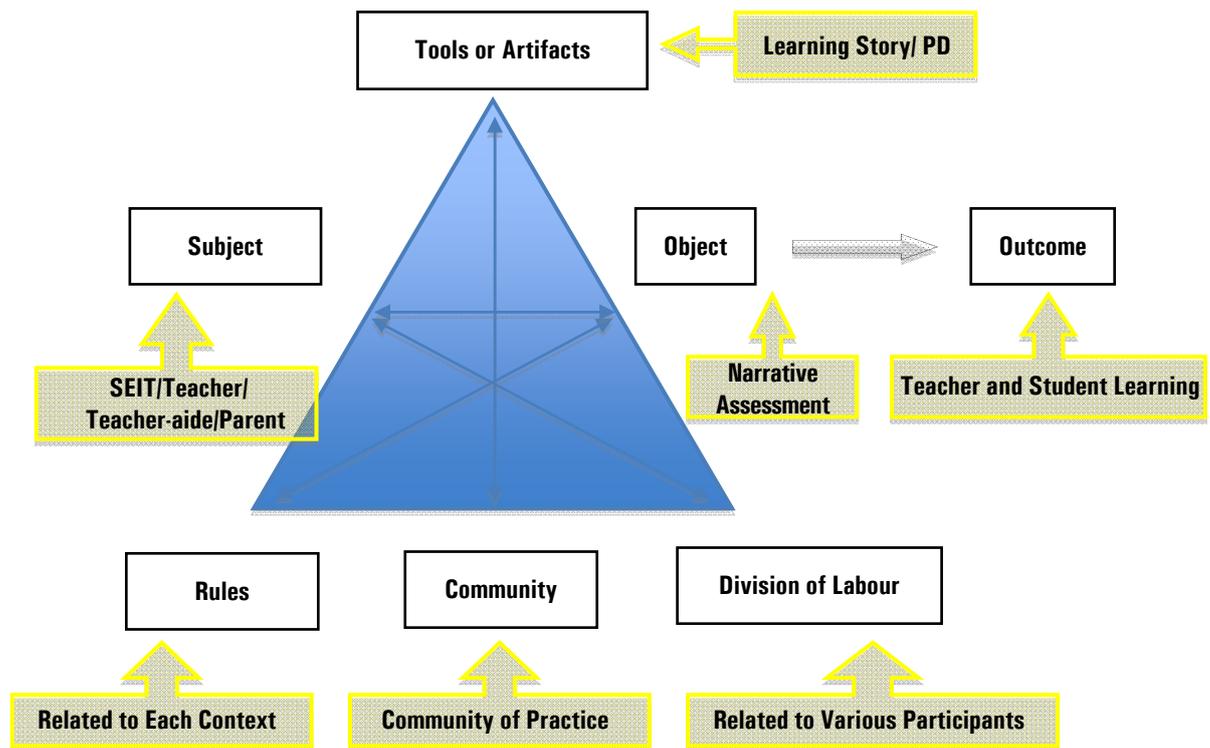
Figure 3: CHAT Framework of Analysis

Engeström (1993) used CHAT as a means to explore a network of activity, premised on the belief that learning within these systems is socially situated and mediated by artifacts. CHAT provides a mechanism to explore multiple roles and functions within a dynamic social and educational system. Vygosty's work (1978) undertaken in the 1920s and 1930s identified the mediating role of artifacts (objects and people) in learning and development, and his concept of cultural mediation. Engeström refers to this as first generation, cultural-historical activity theory, further developed by Leont'ev (1981) who explored the individual action and collective activity

The use of CHAT as an evaluative framework enables researchers and practitioners to understand systems, and themselves within them, and has been recently linked to professional development initiatives in educational settings (Crossouard, 2009; Rizzo, 2003; Webb & Jones, 2009). These have proved useful to explore in school-based settings. Often a range of tensions and contradictions for teachers, teacher-aides, learners, parents, specialists and principals are inherent when change is implemented, and yet they are arguably attempting to achieve the same goal, that of supporting student learning. In the example reported on in this evaluation, SEITS are supporting teacher-aides to enhance student learning and their opportunities to learn, through narrative assessment. However, teachers, teacher-aides and

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SEITs focus on different and sometimes opposing mediating tools to do this. In Crossouard's (2009) evaluation of two professional development initiatives, she found that activity systems are potentially useful for both teachers and researchers when engaging with such complexities. Webb and Jones (2009) evaluated a programme of professional development supporting teachers to introduce formative assessment and were able to identify the changing cultures and practices through the activity theory.

- **What is the role of motive in an activity system?**

What seemed particularly helpful in using activity systems to illuminate the responses to the learning stories PD is the central importance of the motive that the subject brings to that activity and towards the object. The same mediating artifacts can be used within a system (e.g., observations, interviews, teacher professional learning sessions) but depending on the subject's motive to use these, and subsequently operate within these, the system may operate very differently than a system with the same tools but different motive. The power of motive to change an environment has been described by Leont'ev. An activity system is any group of people working together within a common context *but where they all have a different role to play* and possibly different motive. An activity system recognizes the complexity inherent in different rules, divisions of labour and multiple members of that community. In addition, activity systems do not overlap, and are neither static nor fixed. In understanding an activity, establishing motivation is key (Worthen, 2008).

> "
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> *In understanding an activity, establishing motivation is key (Worthen, 2008).*
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> "

- **What are the elements of the activity system?**

Defining the object of study is complex, as "the object of an activity should not be confused with either things out there in the environment or with goals" (Engeström et al, 2002, p. 214). Leont'ev (1977) stated that "the object of activity is its *motive*" (p. 5), and this means that the *reason* we undertake action and participate in activity systems may differ according to the role we assume within the system, while recognizing that individuals will have their own motive that helps define our roles and our subsequent actions in it. In addition, the object of the system has been described as a moving target (Engeström, 2001).

> *Activity in the narrow sense is a unit of subject-object interaction by the subject's motive. It is a system of processes oriented towards the motive, where the meaning of any individual component of the system is determined by its role in attaining the motive (Kaptelenin & Nardi, 2006, p.60).*

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Within an activity system, 'subject' is defined as the individual or sub-group whose agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis, with actions directed at the 'object'. 'Object' is defined as the problem space at which the activity is directed and which is moulded and transformed into 'outcomes'. 'Tools' or mediating artifacts are the modes of communication used to transform object to outcome. As Daniel (2004) states, "the psychological tools and signs that mediate pedagogic relationships vary as a function of cultural, historical and, importantly, institutional context" (p. 187). 'Tools' in activity systems refers to the means (artifact, instrument) relating subject and object to produce the outcome. This occurs within the wider context of the rules, roles and community (lower part of the triangle) (Engeström, 1993, 2001). For the current evaluation, this means that an analysis can examine the inter-connectedness of the subject, object and mediating artifact, and the different roles of the participants, the rules and community of practice within which these are located. For example, simply by introducing narrative assessment, changes occur within the system and for those working within it. The rich complexities of learning and teaching within a classroom environment for all involved (i.e., the teacher, teacher-aide, PD provider, specialist, student and school-policy environment) can be portrayed and analysed.

5. RESULTS

QUESTIONNAIRES

Initial questionnaires were sent to all SEITs (n = 10) and teachers (n = 13) in Cohort 1 during April 2009 and Cohort 2 teachers (n = 11) during September 2009 (see *Appendix 3 for Initial Questionnaire)* prior to commencing with the PD. Within Cohort 1, 8 out of the 10 SEITs and 2 out of the 13 teachers returned the questionnaires, and within Cohort 2, 8 out of the 11 teachers returned the questionnaires, thus giving a total of 18 returns from 34 initial questionnaires. It is interesting to note that 11 of the 13 teachers from Cohort 1 did not complete the initial questionnaires. This is consistent with responses in the interviews where teachers also expressed difficulty finding the time to implement the learning stories as well as participate in the professional development. The following analysis of the questionnaire data thus excludes responses from this group of teachers and any interpretation of the findings should take cognisance of this.

The demographics of the combined data of *Cohort 1* showed that of the 10 participants who responded, 5 had 11 – 20 years of teaching experience, 4 had 21+ years of teaching experience and 1 had 6 – 10 years of teaching experience. Of the 7 SEITS who responded, 6 had 12+ months SEIT experience, while only 1 had between 6 – 12 months SEIT experience. The qualifications of the 10 participants included diploma level (n = 1), degrees (n = 3), post-graduate diploma qualification (n = 5) and Masters (n = 1). These qualifications were gained in New Zealand (n = 7) and overseas (n = 3). Of the 10 respondents, 9 had qualifications or attended courses in special education or inclusive education. All 10 respondents were female.

The demographics for *Cohort 2* showed that of the 8 teachers that returned the questionnaires, 3 teachers had 0 – 5 years of teaching experience, 1 had 6 – 10 years, 3 had 11 – 20 years and 1 had 21+ years of teaching experience. The qualifications of the 8 teachers included diploma level (n = 1), degrees (n = 5) and post-graduate diploma qualification (n = 2). These qualifications were gained in New Zealand (n = 7) and overseas (n = 1). Of the 8 respondents, 4 had qualifications or attended courses in special education or inclusive education, while 4 had not. Seven respondents were female and 1 was male. These data are detailed in Table 6.

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Table 6: Cohort 1 and 2 Demographics of Returned Questionnaires

		COHORT 1 (n = 10) Teachers (n = 8) SEITs (n = 2)	**COHORT 2** (n = 8) Teachers (n = 8)
Teaching Experience	21 + years	4 (40%)	1 (12.5%)
	11-20	5 (50%)	3 (37.5%)
	6-10	1 (10%)	1 (12.5%)
	0-5	0 (00%)	3 (37.5%)
Qualifications	Diploma	1 (10%)	1 (12.5%)
	Degree	3 (30%)	5 (62.5%)
	Postgraduate Diploma	5 (50%)	2 (25.0%)
	Masters	1 (10%)	0 (00.0%)
Qualifications gained in	New Zealand	7 (70%)	7 (87.5%)
	Outside New Zealand	3 (30%)	1 (12.5%)
Attended courses in Special Ed	Yes	9 (90%)	4 (50.0%)
	No	1 (10%)	4 (50.0%)
Gender	Female	10 (100%)	7 (87.5%)
	Male	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)

The *reasons for assessment* given by Cohort 1 SEITs (n = 8) and teachers (n = 2) included primarily to know what the student's strengths and weaknesses were (80%), followed by wanting to help students with their next step learning (70%), finding out what the student knows (70%), and wanting to know how to adapt teaching (70%). Respondents sometimes used assessments to apply for resources or funding (70%) or if they wanted information for the parents (80%). Disagreement with parents or knowing how the student compares with other students was only sometimes (50%) or never (40%) given as a reason for assessment. This is detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: Cohort 1 - Reasons for Assessment

	Mainly		Sometimes		Never		Missing	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Don't know what to do to meet the learner's needs	5	50.0	3	30.0	1	10.0	1	10.0
Don't know what the student knows	7	70.0	2	20.0	1	10.0	0	0.0
Don't agree with the specialist assessment	0	0.0	6	60.0	3	30.0	1	10.0
Are applying for resources or funding	2	20.0	7	70.0	1	10.0	0	0.0
Want information for the parents	2	20.0	8	80.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Want to help students with their next step learning	7	70.0	3	30.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't agree with the parents' view	0	0.0	5	50.0	4	40.0	1	10.0
Want to know what the standard/level the student has achieved	6	60.0	4	40.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Want to know how the student compares with other students	1	10.0	5	50.0	4	40.0	0	0.0
Want to know what the student strengths and weaknesses are	8	80.0	2	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Want to know how to adapt your teaching	7	70.0	3	30.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	100.0

The *reasons for assessment* given by Cohort 2 teachers was overall similar to Cohort 1 and included primarily to know what the student's strengths and weaknesses were (75%), wanting to help students with their next step learning (75%), and wanting to know how to adapt teaching (75%). This was followed by wanting to know what the student had achieved (50%). Teachers sometimes used assessments to find out what the student doesn't know (75%), followed by applying for resources or funding (62.5%), and providing information for the parents (62.5%). Disagreement with specialists was only sometimes (50%) or never (37.5%) given as a reason for assessment. This is detailed in Table 8.

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Table 8: Cohort 2 - Reasons for Assessment

	Mainly		Sometimes		Never		Missing	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Don't know what to do to meet the learner's needs	2	25.0	5	62.5	1	12.5	0	0.0
Don't know what the student knows	2	25.0	6	75.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't agree with the specialist assessment	0	0.0	4	50.0	3	37.5	1	12.5
Are applying for resources or funding	0	0.0	5	62.5	2	25.0	1	12.5
Want information for the parents	3	37.5	5	62.5	1	12.5	0	0.0
Want to help students with their next step learning	6	75.0	2	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't agree with the parents' view	1	12.5	4	50.0	1	12.5	2	25.0
Want to know what the standard/level the student has achieved	4	50.0	3	37.5	0	0.0	1	12.5
Want to know how the student compares with other students	1	12.5	4	50.0	2	25.0	1	12.5
Want to know what the student strengths and weaknesses are	6	75.0	2	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Want to know how to adapt your teaching	6	75.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Cohort 1 and 2 SEITs and teachers reported being confident in their ability to assess students with high and very high needs in relation to the following: accessing resources; knowing the student; preparation for an IEP; day-to-day learning and teaching; identifying the student's strengths and interests; identifying the student's learning needs; identifying teaching opportunities; and providing feedback to parents, the school and to the student. The majority (60% of Cohort 1 and 66% of Cohort 2) responded that they were *not* confident in their ability to assess students with high and very high needs in relation to accessing funding; assistive technology applications, or ORRS funding applications. Cohort 1 and 2 respondents both indicated that the teacher *usually does* the assessment and *should lead* the assessment of learners with high and very high needs, and responses differed as to who were the next most likely personnel to assess or who should lead the assessment – including SENCOs, GSE personnel as well as teacher-aides being identified.

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It was interesting to note that while 70% of Cohort 1 reported that they had *not* used narrative assessments with students with high and very high needs, 60% reported that they had used learning stories. This suggests a perception that learning stories were not considered by SEITs to be a form of narrative assessment at the outset prior to the PD. In contrast 100% of Cohort 2 teachers reported that they *had* used narrative assessment and 62% indicated they had used learning stories, thus suggesting that this group of teachers who volunteered for the PD were more familiar and experienced with narrative assessment and learning stories.

"

"I wanted to find a positive way of reporting to parents"; "I have just revamped our IEP system, and Narrative Assessment fitted perfectly with the new IEPs"; "Having Narrative Assessment will allow me to report back on meaningful "stuff"!

"

In response to the questions of what prompted their involvement in the PD, the majority (6 out of 8) of SEITs in Cohort 1 responded that it was a senior management decision or a requirement of the SEIT position. In contrast the teachers in both Cohort 1 (2 teachers who did participate) and the majority of teachers (6 out of 8) in Cohort 2 provided intrinsic reasons for participating e.g. "I wanted to find a positive way of reporting to parents"; "I have just revamped our IEP system, and Narrative Assessment fitted perfectly with the new IEPs"; "Having Narrative Assessment will allow me to report back on meaningful "stuff"!

A difference was also noted in the responses to the question of what assessment tools or approaches participants currently use for learners with high and very high needs. While only 3 of the 8 SEITs in Cohort 1 identified observations as being a part of current assessment practice, the majority of the teachers (both teachers in Cohort 1 and 5 of the 8 teachers in Cohort 2) used observations as part of their assessment practice. As learning stories are dependent on good observational skills this finding could suggest that the teachers who volunteered for the PD were oriented towards a narrative assessment approach whereas SEITs were oriented more to using standardised assessments as indicated in their responses where tests such as AEPS (5 out of the 8 SEITs), P levels (3 of the 8 SEITs) as well as numeracy and literacy tests such as Schonell and Burt were listed.

In response to the question relating to perceived *barriers to introducing narrative assessment* into the school/cluster, all 8 SEITs and 2 teachers in Cohort 1 saw time constraints as a barrier. In addition they raised the following as barriers: lack of clarity about the project; non attendance at the PD course by TAs, teachers, and parents; misunderstanding of narrative assessment. In contrast only 3 of the 8 teachers in Cohort 2 raised time as an issue with one

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teacher responding that there were no real barriers, just the need to learn how to do it well and get TAs and parents etc involved. A similar view was expressed by another teacher who indicated that not getting the rest of the school involved was a potential barrier. Not surprisingly Cohort 1 reported that *enablers to introducing narrative assessment* into the school/cluster included: effective communication; more information, communication between school teams; exemplars for 'learners' to follow and demystifying the whole process. Cohort 2 reported enablers as being linked to having your own camera, good capable teacher-aide, support from SENCO and by-in by the principal/teacher-aide and other interested parties. Thus concerns for Cohort 1 centred around more extrinsic issues related to time constraints and confusion around involvement in the PD initiative, whereas for Cohort 2 more intrinsic issues relating to implementing learning stories were foregrounded.

In response to the question relating to what participants *expectations of the PD* project were, Cohort 1 focused on issues that would facilitate more effective practices around assessment in general such as: more effective teamwork; better communication; more involvement of students in self evaluation; reporting students learning in ways that are meaningful to students, their families and their educators; combining the use of narrative assessment with the IEP process. Cohort 2 teachers' expectations of the PD were more specific to learning stories themselves, such as: "I want to become confident in writing narratives – with the official 'jargon' and curriculum areas. I would like to learn about different ways of writing narratives and formalise my ideas. I would like constructive feedback and direction to achieve my goal of writing good learning stories", "Exploring 'learning stories' as a form of assessment and its usefulness to us as a special school"; "To use narrative assessment to show me the next steps a child should take" (Teachers, Cohort 2). Both Cohort 1 and 2 participants reported that they would know they had achieved these expectations if their assessment practices changed. For the SEITs in Cohort 1 this involved system's level and attitudinal change, for example "greater home school partnership"; "Teacher/school doesn't see child as a burden. Teacher contributes ideas to programme"; "Notice students learning in more holistic ways and tell about learning in ways that are more accessible to students and families knowledge" (SEITs, Cohort 1). For the teachers in Cohort 2 this change related more to using learning stories specifically: "Parents will be enthused as they receive narratives at intervals throughout the term and will enjoy IEP meetings and will be well informed i.e. how their child is coping/ accessing the curriculum" (Teacher, Cohort 2).

Follow-up questionnaires

Follow-up questionnaires were sent to all Cohort 1 and 2 SEITs and teachers (30) in October 2009 after their involvement in the PD (see *Appendix 10 for Follow-up Questionnaire)*. Despite reminders and questionnaires being resent, of the 30 potential respondents only 9 responses were received (30%). Of those that responded 2 were SEITs from Cohort 1; 7 were teachers (2 from Cohort 1 and 5 from Cohort 2), and all but one expressed voluntary participation in the PD/programme. This is detailed in Table 9.

Table 9: Follow-up Questionnaire Demographics

	Role in School		Cohort for the PD		Participation Voluntary	
	SEIT	Teacher	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Yes	No
P 1		√		√	√	
P 2		√		√	√	
P 3		√	√		√	
P 4	√		√		√	
P 5		√		√	√	
P 6	√		√			√
P 7		√		√	√	
P 8		√		√	√	
P 9		√	√		√	
Total	**2**	**7**	**4**	**5**	**8**	**1**

Participants were asked to rate the *usefulness of various supports* to enable them to implement and use learning stories. Responses are detailed in Table 11 and show that all participants found the following supports very useful or useful: face to face meetings with PD providers (100%); templates for using learning stories (100%), online exemplars (100%) feedback on learning stories (90%). (The one respondent who did not rate the feedback on learning stories helpful commented that "the first feedback I received was a rewrite of my narrative by the facilitator which was not at all helpful"). Perceived usefulness of supports such as email, literature, draft Teachers' Guide, school and GSE supports were mixed, with some respondents commenting that no-one else in the school was part of the PD to provide support or that GSE was not involved. Significant to note was the response to the usefulness of the draft Teachers' Guide – where 3 participants did not comment, 1 person rated it not

useful, and another put a question-mark around that item. Given that the Teachers' Guide formed a significant part of this initiative, and is deemed to be core in developing a sound understanding of this approach to assessment, the lack of awareness about the Draft Teachers' Guide by almost half of the respondents suggests a tension around this dimension of the project.

Table 10: Usefulness of Supports in Implementing Learning Stories

	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful	Missing
Face-to-Face Meetings with PD Providers	5	4		
Templates for Using Learning Stories	4	5		
Feedback on Learning Stories	3	5	1	
Online/Paper Exemplars	2	7		
Email Support from PD Providers	2	4	2	1
Literature and Reading	3	4	1	1
Draft Teachers' Guide	1	4	1	3
School Support	3	4		2
Support from other Teachers	2	4	2	1
GSE Support	3	1	3	2

When asked to rate whether their *understanding of learning stories had changed* over the PD period, 7 of the 9 respondents indicated that it had changed and 2 indicated that it had not - with one of these respondents clarifying that while her understanding hadn't changed she had gained more confidence in writing learning stories. Respondents overall stated that they had greater insight into the use of learning stories, for example "[my] ability to use learning stories in a more specific way – thinking and focusing on what was important and how to build on this learning therefore highlighting next steps" (Teacher, Cohort 1) and "I've realised I can be more flexible – they don't need a set format." (SEIT, Cohort 1).

In response to the question asking respondents to *elaborate on what they had learnt through* their involvement in the PD, participants highlighted: the positive dimension of this form of assessment; the involvement of others including students and parents input; the progressive nature of documenting learning via a string of stories; and the focus on looking at learning in a different way - for example, "using narrative assessment makes me look closer at things the children are achieving which I may have missed before. Also about being more explicit about learning intentions and success criteria" (Teacher, Cohort 2).

The *advantages of using learning stories* were seen to include: being able to capture evidence (incidental) that could easily be overlooked or forgotten - for example "Helps the teacher and aides to observe the student more carefully" (SEIT, Cohort 1); reporting positive things to the parents and taking notice of small but important progress –for example "They show what the student can do. The parents really appreciate them" (SEIT, Cohort 1); having a better way of seeing how children are improving – "since these things aren't covered in school reports" (Teacher, Cohort 2); and tracking learning and informing future learning - for example, "The observation that goes into the student to be able to write the learning story has been very valuable in really seeing what is happening with and for the student" (Teacher, Cohort 1). In addition, the visual dimension of learning stories was identified – for example "Pictures have a huge impact, parents love them, more relevance than standard reporting form" (Teacher, Cohort 2); and the links to curriculum and pedagogy – for example, "You can assess against key competencies rather than give them a blanket L1 curriculum level!" (Teacher, Cohort 2).

In terms of the *disadvantages of using learning stories* – all 9 respondents commented on time constraints being a significant factor. For example, "Something more to add to the work load" (Teacher, Cohort 2); "Time…Time…Time!!!!" (SEIT, Cohort1); "Time! They should be done in bullet points, just a picture and clear/ concise bullet points." (Teacher, Cohort 2). One respondent also commented on the issue of equipment as being a disadvantage – for example "Using digital equipment, not having easy access to digital equipment in a large school" (Teacher, Cohort 2).

In response to how *learning stories were seen to be different from other forms of assessment,* respondents highlighted that learning stories were more focused on the positive, were individualized and allowed for flexibility – for example "It is very individualised and can't be done on mass like standardised testing. Other tests/assessments find out students' knowledge – learning stories analyse learning behaviour as well as knowledge" (Teacher, Cohort 1), "They're totally positive, reporting on what a student has achieved as his/her level – i.e. individual based data. They don't show/highlight how the student is not achieving at level 1 (e.g. diagnostic testing) but rather how the student is accessing the curriculum at level 1. Narrative Assessment can target areas that wouldn't usually be included in assessment" (Teacher, Cohort 2), "Don't have to try and fit the student into a set assessment which often only highlights what he/she can't do"   (SEIT, Cohort 1).

Respondents perceived *the value of using learning stories* as including: a more meaningful, personalised assessment – for example, "Highlights their personal learning, celebrates what they can do and enables me as a teacher to reflect on the students' goals, strategies that are working (maybe thinking about why) and transfer to other situations giving the student greater opportunity for success. "(SEIT, Cohort 1); a more user-friendly assessment – for example, "They can see their photos and in some cases read the text. They can show them proudly to their family and say 'Look what I did'" (Teacher, Cohort 2); and a more in-depth assessment – for example "You become aware of how the student learns – what approach he/she responds well to. You reflect and make changes accordingly – you become more 'tuned in' and collect valuable data that could ordinarily be overlooked" (Teacher, Cohort 1).

Respondents differed in terms of what they perceived *the roles of the student, the teacher-aide, the parent and the SEIT* were in developing learning stories. For some respondents, *the student* was a passive recipient of the story – for example, "No [role] – if he knew he was doing an activity and being assessed he would play up and not cooperate. Our observations are done in a natural – as it happens" (Teacher, Cohort 1); while for other respondents, the student was an active participant – for example, "They [the student] are the star! They know they are important and that what they can do/have done has been noticed/photographed/ recorded and they can show them to family and friends" (SEIT, Cohort 1).

The role of the *teacher-aide* generally was seen as supporting the teacher – for example "being another set of eyes and ears" (Teacher, Cohort 2) and needing skills in "being observant, recording information, informing the team" (SEIT, Cohort 1). Only one respondent felt that "the Teacher-aide can write her own learning stories related to how the student is achieving set goals. Very important that T/As are also part of the PD" (Teacher, Cohort 2). Thus, while in practice teacher-aides were often left to implement the learning stories, only 1 of the 9 respondents suggested that this was their role – the majority of the responses suggested that teacher-aides should support the teacher in the writing of learning stories.

Perceptions regarding the role of *the parent* were also mixed, ranging from parents having limited opportunity for input – for example, "Very little [role], they are shown them [learning story] – most input nothing" (Teacher, Cohort 2); to the desire for more involvement from parents – for example, "So far I haven't had much feedback from parents, but I will refer to them [the learning stories] during IEP meetings and hopefully will get more feedback then" (Teacher, Cohort 2).

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Finally the *role of the SEIT* was seen as being part of the writing team by both SEITs and teachers, for example, as one SEIT in Cohort 1 reported, "[my role includes] writing of narratives, sharing with school team and parent" (SEIT, Cohort 1). Similarly, a teacher in Cohort 2 saw the SEITs' role as being to "set goals with parents, discuss goals with student, evaluate progress, write stories" (Teacher, Cohort 2). This appears to raise a tension related to the original role of the SEIT as envisaged at the outset of the project, where the SEIT were envisaged as working alongside the teacher to support them in their role of implementing and writing the learning stories.

THE INTERVIEWS: HOW LEARNING STORIES WERE EXPERIENCED

Identifying participation

At the beginning of the evaluation of the PD phase, the telephone interviews in April 2009 with the SEITs identified an issue with regards their work in schools with teachers around the PD. They identified a range of challenges including:

➢ Trouble inspiring colleagues;

➢ Getting schools involved (many identified an issue with getting a second school involved: most were able to get at least 1 school involved);

➢ Overwhelming overload (for SEIT) who could manage only one school with regards to PD;

➢ Liaising with teachers and meeting them; this was a time issue, and for SEITs took up considerable time persuading teachers and enthusing them about the project – which was also new to SEITs;

➢ Finding the time for everyone to get together to share the information;

➢ 'Being used as leg work to do all that';

➢ Tricky getting teachers involved when principal has signed up but teachers are reluctant;

➢ An issue with the information that went out to schools: schools wondered what the 'thing' is about, and that more information from the start would be helpful;

➢ Schools not being given much time for arranging teacher release time for the PD days;

➢ Timing as an issue for SIETs and for schools in terms of the lead-in time for the PD.

There seemed to be some communication breakdown between principals and SEITs. The SEITs worked in special schools and itinerated across other schools. The students they chose to work with in relation to the learning stories, in general, were in satellite classes in

other schools. The principals of the special schools did not fully inform the SEIT of their role in this, and the SEITs felt they needed to persuade, enthuse and organize for the teachers in the satellite schools to participate.

Many of the SEITs reported that the PD facilitators were supportive and helped them through the process of working with teachers. Only one SEIT felt the pressure of participating came from the PD provider:

> *I think one of the problems have been it [the PD and intervention] hasn't been spelt out exactly. Not the school, who is taking it when they sign up for the PD. I didn't know either. I thought I was just going on a course to find out about something and if you want to take it up you take it up and then I had [PD facilitator] pursuing me ferociously ever since. At one point I actually asked her 'who are you and what's your role in all this and why are you saying all this to me?' and I felt really rude but no one had explained it to me. So there's a bit of a problem there. (SEIT 4, December, 09)*

According to this SEIT, the teachers did not know what they were taking on, which may explain some of the later drop-out rate of teachers.

> *It wasn't explained to them by whoever should have explained to them that by coming on this course you are committing yourself to doing A, B and C. I'm just being honest here. (SEIT 4, December, 09).*

One SEIT felt that her relationship with teachers changed as the result of participation in the 'PD role', a role unfamiliar to SEITs where they were explicitly requiring a change in teacher practice. This SEIT felt it was not her role to challenge teacher practice yet the PD providers, encouraged her to do so. In this example, the role of SEITs generally became a variable in how successful the PD was perceived by those involved. A similar tension was made by another SEIT at the end of the year.

The pressure of time

Results from the interviews (May, June, and December 2009) identified consistent patterns of areas of difficulties with the implementation of narrative assessment and learning stories for both PD providers and school-based educators.

One of the common responses with regards the 'difficulties' associated with implementation across all groups – teacher-aides, teachers, SEITs and PD providers, was that they perceived the amount of time required to learn about, implement and then write learning stories was additional time to their 'usual' duties and therefore created some stress to participate in the programme.

In one discussion with the researcher, the SEIT explained the issue of time. The names of the child, teacher-aide and teacher have been changed.

Interviewer: Can I clarify why it is the teacher-aide is doing them [learning stories] and not the teacher that you're working with. John's teacher?

SEIT 3: I suppose because the teacher for John especially wasn't on the professional development.

Interviewer: Okay.

S: And Claire the Teacher-aide was, and she spends a great deal, well most of her day with John. And another reason would be that the teacher doesn't have time.

Interviewer: In the time it takes to write a learning story or....?

S: Just in the whole looking after the whole class. Then that added extra to write a learning story for the child. (SEIT, Dec, 09)

In another conversation with two other SEITs (S1 and S2), this issue was again explained:

S1: Time is the biggest thing. Just a matter of, we have the ideas in our heads and we know what we're going to do but it's a matter of sitting down and getting that written up is such an issue some times.

Interviewer: When you say *time* how long do you think it would take you to do a complete learning story?

S2: Not actually very long. The biggest thing I think is the thinking in your mind and I know I take oodles of photos. I'm always taking photos when I'm working with my students and then I think 'oh I'll use that' and or 'I'll use that' but then when you leave it, you don't do it there and then you go to several other schools, and you come back and think 'now I know I was going to do something with that photo now what was it?' or you end up using it in a different way.

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Interviewer: So it's making the time rather than it's time consuming or a bit of both?

S: Yeah.

Interviewer: We're just trying to unpack this time a bit more. What is it about the time?

S1: It's yet another thing that we have to do.

S2: You come back and you've got to write up the case management sheets, and you've got to write up things to do with IEP's, we've got to write up. There's always something.

S1: This is like over and above everything else that we have to do, and I mean if we have to sit while working with the student and jot down a few things, that's fine and we probably will get through that, but then having to come and do it in a specific way the way we want it you know. It would mean setting aside time to do that.

Interviewer: How long would it take to do?

S1: Yeah. Half an hour.

S2: To sit and get your thoughts around it and put it on paper and put your photos in and whatever. But it is finding that time to do it.

The teacher-aide said, "Well what we do is that I actually go home and I write down what I have done during the week if not for the day".

T-A: Time. I think just probably having time on your own to do it.

Interviewer: To actually do the writing up?

T-A: Yes, the writing up.

Interviewer: And you said you do that at home?

T-A: Yes I do it at home. It is part of the job. I do that at home. [At school] Craig (child with special educational needs) needs me all the time.

T-A: Yes time is a factor.

Interviewer: How long would you say it would take you to write it up?

T-A: I usually do it when my children are asleep. So I would spend about a good hour.   Yes for me.   Because that is when I could unwind and then be refocusing at school, you know.

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SEITs also had the role of working with teachers and teacher-aides across a number of schools, and they found the time to liaise and discuss the work was an issue. For example, when one SEIT was asked what the most pressing issues was for her she explained:

Probably meeting with teachers and teacher-aides and you know discussing that. That would be an issue as well because when you want to meet with them they're on duty or they have this to do and you just find. In our general work anyway in the school it's finding time to meet with teachers and things (SEITs, December, 09).

The templates

The use of templates was another issue raised in the interviews by teacher-aides and SEITs. Respondents in some instances generated their own or reworked the format of the computer based template system.

"We do have a template for [learning stories] – it's on the teacher's computer. I tend to write things down manually" (teacher-aide, December, 09)

SEIT 1: This is the template that was given and of course we put our own pictures in and we added all the extras. This is what was given [shows original template] and this is where we changed the size of the lines and what have you, but these things were in there. We did do some using that, actually a few, oh we didn't this here [pointing to the wheel framework] we couldn't highlight on the computer so we had to do it by hand, print it and do it by hand.

SEIT 2: The teachers and the teacher-aides, even the teachers, were complaining 'what do they stand for?' It was just a bit too much, so I tried to do it in a circle and I couldn't, so I just made a little box that goes down the bottom and that they can highlight on their computer.

Interviewer: You've used the three categories from the circle?

SEIT 1: Exactly the same so it's there and they can read it and they can highlight it.

Interviewer: And that can all be done on the computer?

SEIT 1: Everything and you just print it out ......

Interviewer: So you can highlight the things.

SEIT 2: I usually do a table.

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Links to the curriculum

There was little evidence to suggest that the learning stories developed by the teacher-aides or SEITs were directly related to the key competencies or learning areas. In part, this was because they were waiting for a 'wow' moment, a moment they described as happening 'out of the ordinary'. Therefore, there was no systematic data gathering in relation to a curriculum area, but rather a 'novel' moment that could record something of interest. Another reason for the lack of identifiable links to the curriculum was that teacher-aides were generally completing the learning stories and have little in-depth training or teachers' knowledge to develop systematic framework for a learning area. The teacher was often not involved, and therefore the effective teaching pedagogies were largely left to the teacher-aides to adapt. No teacher-aide reported understanding the 'wheel framework' and the SEITs had changed the framework from a circular diagram to a rectangular one; the result being a more linear approach to understanding the key competencies in relation to the learning areas.

A teacher-aide explained that she did not use "the wheel" in reference to the diagram that captured the key competencies, effective pedagogies and learning areas. She did not relate the learning stories to the curriculum, although she did use it to support general learning. She was told by the PD providers not to "stress out" about the wheel which she found comforting as she had little knowledge of how it related to the learning story.

Whose voice?

One SEIT moved away from writing in the third person about a child, and started writing in the first person, as if he were the child. He changed his style over time, and although there was no educational reason, the SEIT felt more comfortable with the style. Other SEITs felt less comfortable with this development, and referred to the child in the third person if they were writing the learning story. They knew of the other development, but felt that if they were to trustfully relay the child's experience, they could not do it justice in the first person.

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This is an example of what the SEIT wrote on behalf of the student:

Today I wrote my name on the computer. After I'd finished my story writing [SEIT's name] got his computer out and asked me to write my name. I had to look on the keyboard of the computer to find the letters of my name. I know all the letters of my name and what sequence they come in now. Firstly I found the N, it doesn't make sense, but after each letter I could look at the screen to check that it was the right letter. I did it all by myself.

A legitimate form of assessment

While this was an endorsed form of assessment from the Ministry of Education, one of the tensions for teachers was incorporating it into their current repertoire of assessment and reporting. The teachers attempted to trial learning stories as an assessment strategy in addition to other forms of assessment and reporting expected from their school. They saw learning stories as 'separate and different' from their other forms of reporting, and therefore it became less legitimate for them, than other types of assessment and reporting requested from the school principal. As the SEITs explained however, part of their job was to help the teachers understand that the Learning Story was a legitimate form of assessment; one that could be integrated within their current repertoire, and in addition, be used as a reporting tool outside of the formal 'school-based' report.

SEIT 3:   I think at the moment they [teachers] are seeing it as an add on but when they can get to a stage where it becomes the alternative then it wouldn't be such a burden but like with the reporting like instead of his report being like everyone else's and I don't know how to fit him into this. They were having to send home a standard school report.

Interviewer: Okay.

SEIT 3:   So now we try to let them know that this is a different way, when you can't do your normal testing that you would do with the rest of the students this is something that you can do whereas previously they didn't know what really we would go in and ... It wasn't recognised, I guess it's like they're now being told well this is a recognised form.

Other SEITs explained that using learning stories as a form of reporting to parents enabled the assessment to be more accessible to them, "I think it's [learning story] definitely a form of reporting. I mean to report we have to have assessed, but it's just the more informal, it's a more understandable way for more detailed and understandable way for parents".

SEIT 3: Yeah I mean this for me it's personally a bit of gratification for me to say 'oh wow what's actually happening is he has gone from doing that at the start of the year, which I didn't capture and now he's writing actual stories', you know, and when mum and dad see that it's good for them as well. They had instant smiles on their faces once they saw this. (December, 09)

SEIT 3: I guess in normal, well what's traditional, school reporting is sometimes achieved, almost achieved, always achieved and just been those ticks instead of seeing that it's much more impact. (December, 09)

SEIT 1: I've had the teacher write up some and now even more so because she was doing the students report. We're looking at doing it in a different format, more kind of a narrative, a learning story format.

Interviewer: Instead of the report?

SEIT 1: So she's changing the format of the report because the school report just didn't work, so now she's changing that and doing that it in this way so they are starting to think about it more and discuss it more.

SEIT 2: Which I must admit when I say neither of the teachers have written a narrative assessment. One of the teachers did take it on board to do the photos in his report and change the format.

SEIT 1: I think it's pretty much the same with them once they sit and get their heads around it and get it going it gets done.

SEIT 2: Which we did as well didn't we when we had to do our mid year report?

SEIT 1: Yes we did it all.

SEIT 2: We asked our Principal if it was okay we didn't use the standard report form. We wanted to write one with the photos and things.

SEIT 1: So we did our reports around that.

Interviewer: So you see it as a good way of reporting to parents?

SEIT 1: Yes

However, while the learning story does identify what a child 'can' do, it seldom identifies the next steps or issues around learning. This was seen by SEITs as a possible issue with regards seeing learning stories as an assessment tool.

SEIT 2: I must confess, because we did our reports in the spaces with photos and just little learning stories, I had a parent come into me the next day and she said to me well what's this all about. This is a record of his learning and of how he's going in the classroom and the things he's learnt. She said but I know all of that. I want to know what he doesn't know where to start with him.

Teacher: ... there is a tendency to err on the side of 'oh yes but they can do all this'. I feel sometimes I have to say 'yes but, if we want them to progress we're going to have to work a bit on the can't do's as well as the can do's'.

For many teachers, like the one reported below, the learning stories were not viewed as an integrated system into the teacher's pedagogical repertoire, assessment, IEP or any other discernable process already occurring within the school

[Learning stories] seems to be, at the minute, it seems to be completely separate. But if the two [IEPs and learning stories] were somehow integrated, there might be more done in schools around it. It's kind of, it seems to be a bit of a stuck-on at the moment.

School policy

With regards to school policy there seemed to be two tensions: one was that existing assessment frameworks had to be adhered to while also introducing narrative assessment, and the second was that the IEP process was, for some schools, seen as a separate process.

SEIT 1: Anyway whether we do a report in a narrative form or whether we do any other report we're not allowed to put anything negative in there. It has to be written in a positive way. To go home. It has to be written in a positive way. It's what the student can do – it's not what they can't do.

Interviewer: Is that school policy?

SEIT 2: Yes.

SEIT 1: Yes. That's the policy.

SEIT 2: Because, they say, well parents are hearing enough negative things about their children and they know what they can't do.

SEIT 1: Exactly so it has to be written in a positive way, but in saying that, when we look at next steps would be the area where we, I wouldn't say it would be the negative that we would write, but what we would look to focus on.

SEIT 2: But for us to be able to write what the next step is we need to, where do we get that from? We have to have some knowledge of what's lacking.

Interviewer: As an assessment tool it doesn't do that for you?

SEIT 2: It doesn't give the resource of how to look. It's not like a check-list thing that says 'they can do this', ' can't do that'. No. That's like a separate thing that maybe we'd refer to and we think this shows he can do that. I'd have to look over here to see what the next thing is to focus on. It doesn't really do it. Unless you've got that experience in your mind, to know what would come next.

Issues relating to technology

For those who either had attempted to use learning stories, or had difficulty in maintaining the development of a thread explained common issues relating to the use of technology. While no teacher or teacher-aide, or specialist (e.g., SEIT) felt that learning stories were a 'waste of time', they reported that they could not *find the time* to create them as this involved added issues relating to technology such as:

➢ Lack of IT skills
➢ Use of technology, having camera, laptop on hand
➢ formatting pages and things
➢ extra workload around technology

SEIT 2: Technology in the moment happens and your batteries don't go in the camera.

SEIT 1: Probably meeting with teachers and teacher-aides and you know discussing that. That would be an issue as well because when you want to meet with them they're on duty or they have this to do and you just find. In our general work anyway in the school it's finding time to meet with teachers and things.

SEIT 2: And budget...I printed them out in colour, my black and white things are there at one of the schools. We can only print them out in black and white and they don't actually come out that well. No. It's a budget thing. They [the teachers in another school] can't print in colour at all.

SEIT 1: They're fortunate that we do everything in colour for them, but schools will tell us straight, they're not allowed to print in colour.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

A sample of 41 learning stories was collected for analysis. These learning stories represented 6 students (4 male, 2 female) and were collected at the end of the school year (December 2010) from 5 schools. As individual students were not part of the evaluation, no identifying features or dates of birth are available. However, the students from the sample were all from the primary school sector. As shown in Table 7 the learning stories were generally linked to the curriculum. However, while the areas were identified on the template in the form of a chart, there was not always a match in the actual learning story. All learning stories reflected a credit based approach and the teachers, teacher-aides and SEITs described the positive aspects of the child's participation in the activity. There was minimal focus on a deficit view, almost to the extent that areas for further learning were often left out. These issues also came through in the interviews where teachers reported that it was school policy not to be negative when reporting on child's progress. Teachers misinterpreted this as also being not able to report on the child's needs for learning. Another area that became highlighted through the analysis was little links to teaching as inquiry. There was minimal evidence of where teachers reflected on their role as a teacher or identified the need to examine aspects of their pedagogy to support learning.

Table 11: Analysis of Learning Stories Against Criteria

Samples of student learning stories against identified criteria for effective learning stories						
STUDENT (GENDER)	A (m)	B (f)	C (m)	D (f)	E (m)	F m)
Progress strengthening learning over time	√	X	X	P	√	X
Authentic powerful learning voice	P	P	X	√	√	P
Learning made explicit and specific	P	P	X	√	√	X
Teaching as inquiry	X	X	X	P	X	X
Credit based	√	√	√	√	√	√
Linked to the curriculum	√	√	P	√	√	X
Student centred assessment	√	√	P	√	√	P
Codes X no evidence of this; √ evidence of this; P Partial evidence of this						

Student A: 10 learning stories; written by SEIT and 1 by the PD provider. These were written across time, but were not related or linked. The learning stories were linked to the curriculum and key competencies. After the first 4 learning stories, the wheel diagram was converted into a rectangle. The areas were highlighted but not elaborated on, or explained through the learning story. The learning stories were written as a summative piece and there were no next steps identified.

Student B: 6 learning stories; written by the SEIT and special education advisor. These were linked to the curriculum and key competencies but the wheel diagram was used once, and then converted into a rectangle. The learning stories were a summative statement of what the child could do on this specific occasion, and did not identify next steps, or the teacher's pedagogical strategies for supporting the student. Photographs were used in all learning stories, but were of the activity, not the child engaged in learning, to show how the text related (e.g., in the third picture, [child] completed the activity that required her to fill in the vowel sounds).

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Student C: 7 learning stories; written by the SEIT. Some of these were linked to the curriculum and key competencies (the wheel diagram was used initially on 2, and this was converted into a rectangle diagram for 2; and 3 did not have a reference to the curriculum). Photos were used and a sample of the student's writing was included in one. The reason for the learning was unclear. For example, in one learning story it stated, "John is getting his hands dirty. Wow what an experience this was, not only for John but the whole school". The learning area, key competency and aim were not described, nor were next steps. The 6-sentence learning story ended with "A nice cup of hot soup was enjoyed by all after their morning's effort of hard work".

Student D: 2 learning stories; written by the teacher (undated). The learning stories are written with a teaching session explained, the child's involvement and a brief analysis of the learning in relation for next steps. The teacher wrote it and the subsequent analysis of the learning story connects to her own strategies as a teacher and what she plans to do as a result. For example, "as a result of this observation I have started to buddy S and G up more often" and later on "I look for appropriate responses from S now when I'm teaching the class because she has shown that she is capable". The teacher identified the links to the curriculum, although the wheel diagram was not used.

Student E: 3 learning stories; written by the teacher and were connected across time. The curriculum area was identified although there was no link to the wheel. Goals and next steps were outlined. The learning stories were linked to the IEP goals and the teacher had developed her own template that she was trialling before supporting other teachers. In the detailed observation, she noted the child's behavior and responses, the teacher's responses and how she assisted the child. For example, when describing her work with the child using an interactive whiteboard, she explained how, when using the story 'Old woman who swallowed a fly", the student needed to touch and drag the appropriate animal into the old ladies mouth. She wrote "I assisted by stretching my hand to remain in contact with the whiteboard . When we got to the mouth I automatically let go".

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Student F: <u>13 learning stories</u>; written by a teacher-aide. Not dated, and no curriculum area identified. There were no next steps or goals identified. Each learning story was one-page with photos, and approximately 8–12 sentences per learning story. The learning stories did explain how the teacher-aide attempted to interact and change her style with the child. They also showed a reflective component. For example, when explaining her supervision of the child during break she explained that at the start of the year "I tried to stand back and let him interact as much as he could but found that he was to shy to approach other children". By the end of the year (written within the same learning story however) she explained that when she stood back from him during the break "from what I could seem he seemed to like it better when he was not being watched all the time, and I guess he felt more like the other children". At the end of the story she wrote, "Mark now plays at break time without having someone looking after him and spends his time with lots of different children. It's really neat to see him enjoying his break time like the other children do".

Table 12: Number of References to the New Zealand Curriculum in the Learning Stories

Number of times curriculum areas identified across the sample					
Key Competencies		**Learning Areas**		**Effective Pedagogy**	
Managing self	1	English	11	Creating a supportive learning environment	4
Relating to others	5	Health and Physical Education	1	Encouraging reflective thought and action	5
Participating and contributing	6	Social Sciences	0	Enhancing the relevance of new learning	2
Thinking	7	The Arts	1	Facilitating shared learning	5
Using language symbols and texts	16	Technology	1	Making connections to prior learning and experience	8
		Science	0	Providing sufficient opportunities to learning	9
		Mathematics and Statistics	7	Teaching as inquiry	0
		Learning Languages	0	E-learning and pedagogy	0

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While there was no consistent reference to The New Zealand Curriculum in the learning stories, especially in cases where the teacher-aide had written them, there were patterns showing that certain key competencies, learning areas and effective pedagogies were used more than others. Across the learning stories, in the cases where teachers, SEITs or teacher-aids indicated a curriculum area, there was a tendency to use multiple references. For example, they may have listed two key competency areas and a range of pedagogies. As the table above shows, the most likely key competency chosen was using language, symbols and texts (n=16), English was the most likely learning area (n=11) and the most cited pedagogies were 'making connections to prior learning and experience' (n=8) and 'providing sufficient opportunities to learning' (n=9).

- **Issues with the criteria highlighted:**

1. The *Progress strengthening learning over time*, suggests the curriculum area is linked and that the learning stories are around the same learning objective or key competency. Some of the learning stories were written across time, and indicated general progress but were not confined to the one key area.

2. The criteria for *Credit based* were met by all learning stories. However in doing so, few learning stories identified what the child needed to learn, or what the teacher could do to support the child where there were major issues in learning. In general, the narrative assessment approach, being credit based, did not highlight major areas for concern with regards either teaching or learning.

3. The criteria for *linked to the curriculum* was evident where the teacher wrote the learning story. The teacher understood what a key competency, learning area and effective pedagogy meant in theory and practice, whereas the teacher-aides indicated through the interviews, and through their learning stories that they did not know what these meant or how they related to the child's learning. The SEITs were able to link to the curriculum but there was less evidence that they did this in relation to their own teaching. This was largely because they were not the day-to-day teacher for the child, and met the child only on a weekly basis.

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6. ACTIVITY SYSTEM ANALYSIS

The Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEITs) were to be provided with PD from an external professional development provider, and these SEITs were then to work with teachers to introduce the strategy into schools. It meant therefore that these specialist teachers (SEITs) were working in schools (a) introducing narrative assessment and learning stories and, (b) supporting teachers in a PD environment, a role they were not usually involved in undertaking. In addition to this, although not identified at the time, many teachers did not want to participate as they felt overloaded with work and other initiatives in the school. The SEITs felt compelled to be involved because they believed it was their assigned 'role' as a SEIT to participate in this initiative. In order to 'make it work', many SEITs worked with teacher-aides instead of teachers to introduce the new initiative. Therefore, as evaluators, the system changed with instant effect when the 'roles' of SEITs changed, the roles of teacher-aides changed by the nature of their intense involvement in the project, and during the first phase of its introduction, relatively few teachers participated in the project. The professional development providers, contracted to provide the PD service continued with these complexities and held workshops, seminars, onsite visits, and email contact with the SEITs.

An important factor that had a marked effect on the system was the absence of a Teachers' Guide that had been developed to support the PD process. It was still in draft form, and not released by the Ministry of Education until 9 months after the project with participating schools started. Therefore, this meant the SEITs, PD providers and teacher-aides were recreating templates, learning stories and narrative assessment without the Teachers' Guide and only with draft form of the exemplars to work from.

- ▪ **Examining the activity systems**

The evaluation of the introduction of narrative assessment through professional development in schools captured both the complexities of using a new form of assessment, involving different roles for teachers, SEITs, teacher-aides and parents, as well the involvement of a PD provider 'coming into' each school-based system. As Russell (1997) pointed out, "the very presence of even a single newcomer, no matter how powerless, can change an activity system" (p.11) and "a newcomer may pick up (appropriate) some tool from one activity

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system, carry it back to a familiar activity system, and put it to use (perhaps a very different use), transforming that activity system in the process" (p. 11).

Contradictions do occur in complex systems, and particularly where a number of roles play out within a system. Engeström (2001) in one study, pointedly brought to the participants' attention the contradictory demands inherent in their work by showing multiple views of a 'reality' via a videotaped patient case in a health care system. In this, he showed a number of specialists and health care practitioners supporting young children submitted to a children's hospital where there were contradictions between the object of patient health care and the rule of cost-efficiency.

In an education context, principals, teachers, specialist, inservice teacher educators and itinerating support teachers participate actively to support student learning, but also encounter contradictions in *how* they achieve common goals. They do so through their various roles, which at times conflict with rules or expectations within the context they work, creating tensions within and between systems. In identifying some of these contradictions and acting on them, barriers to teacher learning, and to policy implementation can be explored.

- **Example one: Understanding the rules and roles**

An exploration of 'rules' and 'roles', as understood in activity systems, created a particularly clear illustration of what happened in and following the PD. According to Engeström (1993, 2001), rules refers to the tacit and explicit regulations, norms, and conventions that constrain actions and interventions within the activity system. 'Roles' refers to horizontal division of tasks between members of the community, and vertical division of power and status. Analysis using activity systems thus provided an example of the importance of teachers, and indeed PD providers and the Ministry of Education as instigators of the initiative, to understand the 'rules' of an initiative and the context within which it is introduced at an early stage in that initiative. It also showed the importance of considering the role changes suggested by the PD and implications of this for teachers. It became apparent that when an initiative implied actions that did not fit into the current role of teachers, tensions arose for the teachers about whether it was seen as a meaningful and credible activity for them and about the identity of the person who would fulfil that function.

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As shown in Figure 4, tensions were created through the introduction of the PD between roles, rules and the time allocated to develop and trial the new initiative within each school. This demonstrates how *time* essentially became a systems issue because of the shift in roles and rules, as distinct from an individual issue, where teachers, teacher-aides or SEITs personally felt they did not have time.
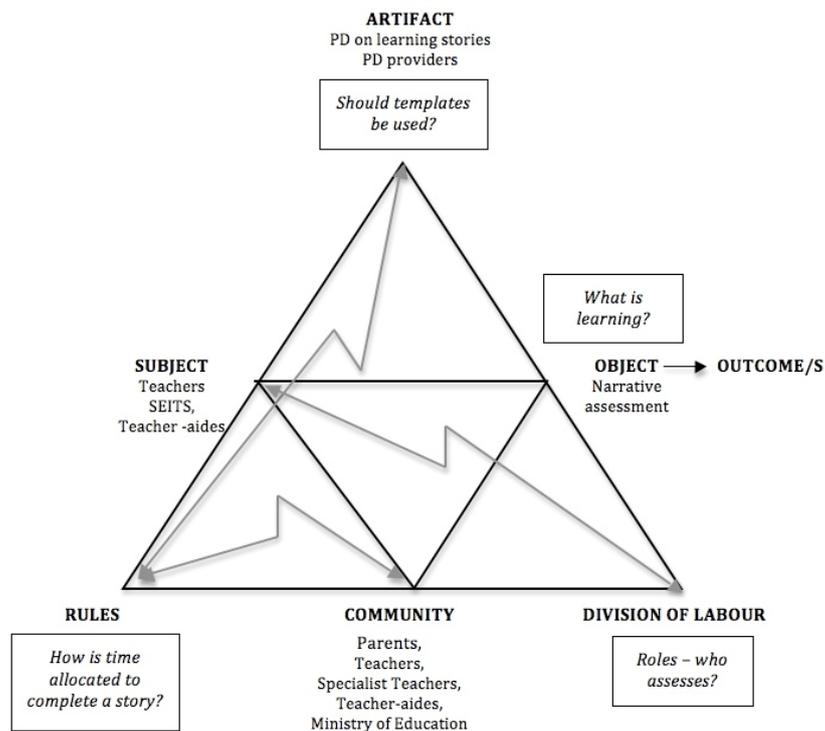

Figure 2: Understanding the rules and the roles

Figure 4: CHAT Analysis: Understanding the Rules and Roles

Teachers pulled out of the project early on, some because of time commitments and others because their principal had not provided them with enough information, or no release time to attend the PD day, and therefore SEITs were often left with the charge of finding new teachers to participate. These SEITs were juggling time commitments and responsibility for getting teachers involved. For example, at the beginning of the PD period, SEITs were not sure how they would fit it in:

> *"I'm feeling there's a lot to do, I'm not sure I can fit it in to be honest. I still have to get [a teacher] on board which is hard...I'm trying to find someone else. I'll have to convert them, get them to see the merit in it when they haven't had the PD day like I have"* (SEIT, May, 09).

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Alongside this, there were various understandings of rules, especially within this current example, where narrative assessment and learning stories had not previously been used with school-aged students. When there was some confusion, teachers preferred templates, structure and a format, and used this as the basis for becoming increasingly creative and flexible, hence 'bending the rules'. One teacher commenced the process by "reading some articles" and going to the back section of the article to get practical examples. Another teacher reported going online and 'googling' narrative assessment and learning stories prior to the PD day because she felt she 'should know' about them but did not.

Later, at a PD day, teachers continued to ask the PD providers to produce 'a template' in the absence of the Teachers' Guide that had yet to be released by the Ministry of Education. This created some tension as, on the one hand, the PD providers felt they were not doing their job if the teachers required a template because they wanted them to understand the process and create their own learning stories while, on the other hand, teachers felt they needed some starting point through a recognised exemplar. During the first visit to one of the schools, a teacher stated it would have been helpful to have a template as:

"I don't know if I did this right", "I want to know if I'm on the right track", and that with a guide "you don't forget anything". (Teacher). As this teacher also indicated, she asked, "Do I have the essential things in this...if someone else reads this, will they see what I am seeing?"

After the PD day, the researchers made two visits to the schools, and by the end of the second visit to SEITs and teacher-aides in their own schools, the researchers observed teachers reworking the templates to fit their local circumstances and moved away from the original structured format.

In terms of the roles, the introduction of learning stories created a range of issues. For a start, many teachers actively chose not to participate even though the principal of the school had put their name forward. Much negotiation between the schools and PD facilitators ensued, resulting in the teacher-aides, and the visiting SEITs taking primary responsibility for the initiative. One specialist teacher reported:

"There is a teacher who seems to want me to be a glorified teacher-aide. She asks me what I think, but she's not letting me take charge like the other teachers do. I'm hoping the PD will help me with strategies and ideas for that. I hope it will get the schools to

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understand our roles (SEITs). I'm a qualified teacher but I'm not a special education teacher, I'm not an expert so I hope this will help" (SEIT, April 2009).

The SEITs felt that part of the introduction of learning stories into schools, was a function of their role, and therefore seemed to feel some compulsion to 'make it work'. As a result, they worked with teacher-aides to implement the strategy, with the effect that for some children, their teachers were not directly involved in the process. It therefore negated the purpose of the formative assessment which was to engage in dialogue with teachers about their own pedagogy and practice. Teacher responses to the questionnaires administered prior to the PD suggested an explanation for these actions. These responses suggested that teachers see themselves as the person who does and should lead assessment, and also see themselves as confident in their current forms of assessment (i.e., in assessing students in relation to learning, 'knowing' the student, preparing for the IEP, reporting to parents and accessing resources). In terms of their role and how they saw their role, there did not seem to be any reason to change.

Also, whilst teachers reported that it is mostly they who do, and should lead, the assessment process, they identified teacher-aides as next most likely to *do* the assessment. There is evidence therefore to suggest teachers might not have motivation to change their assessment practices, even though learning stories seem to be entirely consistent with their espoused views on assessment. Also, there was a suggestion that if teachers could be encouraged to explore the use of learning stories, they might find them very appropriate and useful. We found that teachers who *are* using learning stories provided rich feedback on the value of using this form of assessment for parents, teachers, students and support teams.

A striking issue for the teacher-aides, SEITs and those teachers who did participate in this PD initiative, was the general *lack of time* they experienced. This was reported in relation to the time taken to be involved in PD, to try new initiatives, to write a learning story and then to seek feedback from the PD provider. For many of these educators, they were attempting to 'add on' to their workload, rather than incorporate it into their practice. The artifact became a 'job' to do, with SEITs and teacher-aides taking a more surface approach to their learning. They (and possibly the PD providers) wanted visible evidence of their learning story, and therefore did not see it as changing their own practice. The need for a template was seen as an expeditious measure, as noted by a SEIT, "the template made me realise I could do a quick

version and get on with life. Prior to the day, the exemplars seemed very descriptive, very long and could be seen as a burden" (SEIT, May, 09). A teacher-aide also felt there was not enough time, but for her it was around writing down the child's experiences as they occurred so that there was a record of learning to sit alongside the photographs and other forms of evidence of learning.

- **Example two: Understanding the artifact**

This professional and resource development initiative, introduced by the Ministry of Education, was to support teacher assessment for students with high and very high needs, to utilise learning stories as a form of narrative assessment. While learning stories have been used in early childhood settings (Carr, 2001, Cullen, Williamson & Lepper, 2005), they have not been used in regular primary or secondary schools. Therefore, many teachers were unclear as to what constituted a learning story, narrative assessment or what made 'describing a scene' at school move into a form of assessment. Subsequently, the object itself (learning story) created confusion, and it was also unclear who should be writing the learning story so a subsequent tension between artifact and role was also identified (Figure 5).
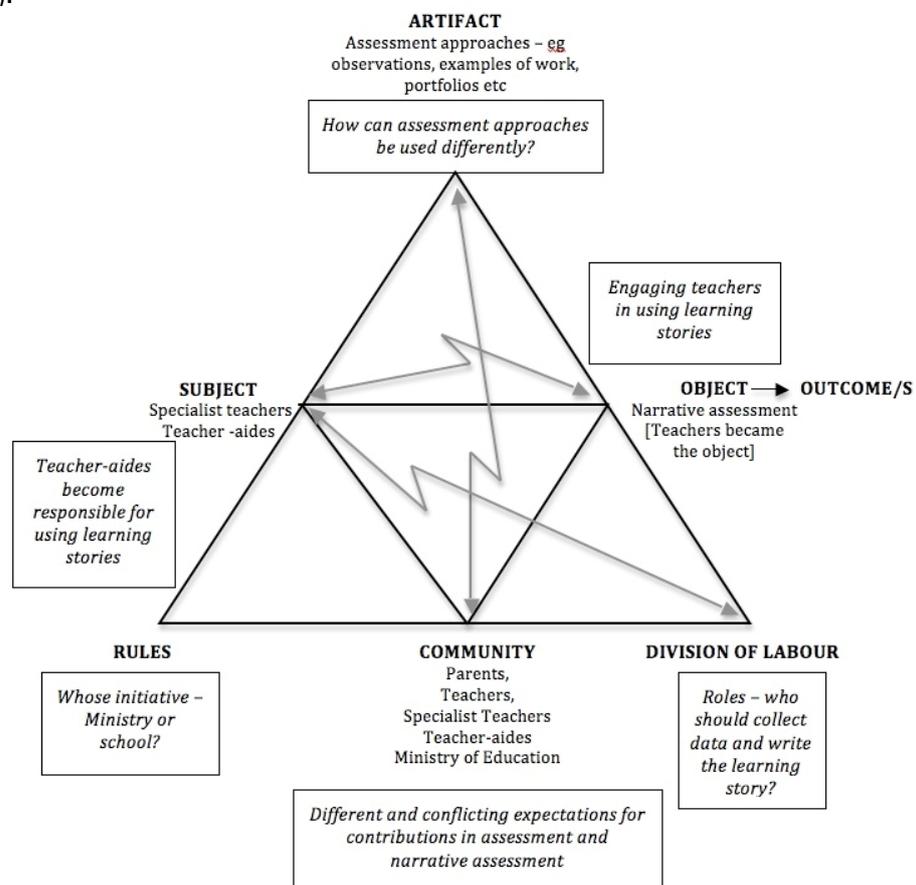
Figure 5: CHAT Analysis: Understanding the Artifact

The earlier issue of the need for a template and a teachers' guide, seemed key for the teachers and teacher-aides in reaching an understanding of the object in order to engage with the artifact. Increasingly, given the teachers' reported paucity of time to engage fully with the collection and analysis of data and writing of learning stories, this became the teacher-aides 'job' or 'role', with some of them reporting completing them in their own time, at home. A template was provided by the PD facilitators, and one of the SEITs later noted "I'm glad somebody asked for a template, we need to know what information to include, so that it's standardised" (SEIT interview, May, 09). However, the point of narrative assessment is that it is not standardised, but for these SEITs having some basis of a systematic framework to give to teacher-aides appeared to provide confidence and stability in their practice. Ironically, the PD for these teachers and SEITs was intended to create instability in order to forge new ways of thinking about pedagogy and practice through narrative assessment. This approach is consistent with current views on supporting and challenging teacher practice through professional learning initiatives (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung 2007).

The mediating tool for the teachers and SEITs was viewed as 'new' and 'time consuming'. However, in the earlier survey, teachers reported that the three main assessment methods for learners with high and very high needs were: collecting examples of work (910 teachers) and observations (910 teachers), anecdotal records (851 teachers) and portfolios (770 teachers). These were followed by checklists (744 teachers), interviews (727 teachers), and running records or reading (715 teachers). The least used assessment methods were P-levels (57 teachers), ASDAN (92 teachers), and psychometric tests (121 teachers). Therefore, the assessments that the teachers were already doing (examples of work, observations, anecdotal records, checklists and interviews) largely made up the components of a learning story. In the questionnaire, teachers also reported that they found observations (78.9%), anecdotal records (56.2%) and portfolios (51.7%) provided the most useful information (Bourke, Mentis, & Todd, in press). The interesting factor then is, *why teachers find narrative assessment difficult, and choose to opt out of professional learning support for this strategy, when the mediating artifact involves what they already do and value?*

There was evidence from questionnaire responses of teachers that despite their orientation to a more formative assessment approach through the use of observations, work samples and interviews, learning stories were comparatively unknown and seldom used. There was even a suggestion that teachers did have a knowledge of the underlying philosophy and use of basic techniques of a formative approach as well as a perception that this approach provided more *useful* assessment than standardized norm tests. One possible explanation is in the way the artifact is perceived by teachers. It is seen as a Ministry of Education initiative, they did not choose to participate in the PD, and narrative assessment and learning stories are seen as time consuming, without a discernible tangible framework. These issues have largely been resolved through the publication of the *Teachers' Guide* and the website showcasing exemplars in action. Subsequently, a new group of teachers have opted into the programme through choice and an evaluation of this group of participants could provide a valuable comparison given that many of the tensions and contradictions outlined in this early implementation would no longer apply – in particular understanding of roles and artifact. Voluntary participation of teachers would eliminate the difficulties experienced by SEITs of engaging teachers and when failing to do so defaulting to working with teacher-aides. Teachers would have first hand experience of the PD and access to the Teachers' Guide and website at the outset, thus reducing tensions around understanding the artifact.

- **Example three: How important is the object?**

One of the findings of the report showed a dissonance between participants' expectations and beliefs as to what they were doing, and why. In effect, this contributed to the tensions that were subsequently created when teachers, teacher-aides and SEITs determined who was responsible for instigating the learning stories and for maintaining the use of learning stories within the classroom context.

This example also highlights the importance of understanding the motivation and volition of all those involved in a PD initiative (the PD providers, teachers, teacher-aides, and SEITs) in relation to the *object* of the initiative. As identified in this Case Study, tensions arose when the object of the PD was unclear (i.e. What is Narrative Assessment? What are we trying to achieve?), and in determining who was involved in the creation of these.

In addition, as mentioned before, the issue of time identified throughout the evaluation PD implementation phase by PD providers, teachers, and SEITs meant that commitment and motivation to reaching a clear understanding was not apparent within the teacher cohort. It was the deemed 'lack of time' that disabled the comprehensive implementation and writing of the learning stories. For many teachers, they opted directly out of the process, and consistently, did not complete aspects of the evaluation (e.g., 11 of the 13 teachers from Cohort 1 did not complete the initial questionnaires). As discussion through the interviews showed, teachers expressed difficulty finding time to implement the learning stories as well as participate in the professional development. They simply did not see the value.

Overall, the tension created in this example was shown through the participants' individual and collective motivation and volition for incorporating 'learning stories' and the non-participation by teachers who genuinely believed that there was not enough time to struggle with the intricacies of working through a relatively new approach of assessment. The tensions highlighted here work within the upper part of the triangle where the subjects (teachers) did not value the object (narrative assessment) enough to feel it warranted their time to work with the medicating artifact (PD and learning stories, and different use of assessment tools). For those that did, they persevered. For example, one SEIT explained that he was motivated by the parents' responses to receiving the learning stories.

> *I mean this, for me, it's personally a bit of gratification for me to say 'oh wow what's actually happening is he has gone from doing that at the start of the year, which I didn't capture and now he's writing actual stories', you know and when mum and dad see that it's good for them as well. They had instant smiles on their faces once they saw this. (SEIT interview).*

The questionnaire data from the Case Study showed that 70% of Cohort 1 had not used narrative assessments with students with high and very high needs, while 60% reported that they had used learning stories. This suggests a perception by SEITs that learning stories were not considered to be a form of narrative assessment at the outset prior to the PD. Hence we continue to see a tension around how the artifact is understood (learning stories versus narrative assessment) and how they relate to the common goal or outcome for students.

> " *I mean this, for me, it's personally a bit of gratification for me to say 'oh wow what's actually happening is he has gone from doing that at the start of the year, which I didn't capture and now he's writing actual stories', you know and when mum and dad see that it's good for them as well. They had instant smiles on their faces once they saw this. (SEIT interview).* "

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Interestingly, when we explored how the teachers who *did* participate in the PD initiative (as distinct from the SEITs) experienced and used narrative assessment, 100% reported using narrative assessment, with 62% indicating the use of learning stories. This shows that teachers who spent time working with narrative assessment and learning stories, did find the time, and actively engaged in using narrative assessment and learning stories.

While both Cohort 1 and 2 respondents indicated that the teacher usually does the assessment and should lead the assessment of learners with high and very high needs, it was largely the teacher-aides who completed the learning stories. A belief of 'who should do it', that is, the identified division of labour, did not always match with 'what actually happened', and this effectively created tensions for teachers, who felt they were not doing what they should be, teacher-aides who felt they were doing something they should not have to, and SEITs attempting to juggle who did what, but wanting to ensure 'it happened'. Ultimately, when there was little consensus on what the object of the exercise was, that is, what narrative assessment was, how learning stories fitted into the teaching and learning programme, it became an 'add-on' and something that teachers did not feel compelled to explore in any depth. Therefore, their understanding of their role, and the point of the exercise was limited. A SEIT explained how teachers felt:

It wasn't explained to them [the teachers] by whoever should have explained to them that by coming on this course you are committing yourself to doing A, B and C. I'm just being honest here. I think teachers are always willing, or most, 99 out of a 100 teacher are enthusiastic about anything new they think is going to help improve their classroom practice, but once you start being heavy handed with them it's going to get resentful.

It's fine if you've got a teacher-aide who, with a special needs child who is confident, which a lot of them are, that's fine 'cause they can take on some of that responsibility. And also if there's a SEIT involved they can do some of it, but we're only there once a week with the children and I think that was forgotten as well in the process, you know and we're not going there every day - we're just there once a week. (SEIT interview).

The artifact, or the assessment approaches (such as observations, examples of work, portfolios) that could have been used as part of the PD exercise to integrate learning stories was not seen as relevant by teachers. The object, for narrative assessment, was not clear for teachers who did not understand the rationale for changes in their pedagogical approaches. As the request for PD had not come directly from the teachers, their motivation and volition to change was not apparent.

> *I've said I'll do the writing of the stories because that was really putting teachers off because they have all the reports to do for 30 children. They're up to their eyes, they're the people on the work face and I think in some ways they resent someone coming in and saying you should be doing this and producing this especially for this child. They work their socks off; I know what it's like because been there done that kind of thing. Even the teaching is exhausting enough certainly in primary school, plus you've been dealing with a children with behavioural issues as well it's even more exhaustion and then this is yet more paperwork. (SEIT interview).*

The motivation for the PD providers came through their contractual agreement with the MOE, but did not come through their identification that teachers or schools needed support. The PD providers had not worked in special education and were unaware of the complexities of the system and the multiple agencies and personnel working in the area. In response to the questions of what prompted involvement in the PD, the majority (6 out of 8) of SEITs in Cohort 1 responded that it was a senior management decision or a requirement of the SEIT position. In contrast the teachers in both Cohort 1 (2 teachers who did participate) and the majority of teachers (6 out of 8) in Cohort 2 provided intrinsic reasons for participating (e.g., "I wanted to find a positive way of reporting to parents"; "I have just revamped our IEP system, and narrative assessment fitted perfectly with the new IEPs"; "Having NA will allow me to report back on meaningful 'stuff').

Figure 6: CHAT Analysis: How Important is the Object?

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7. CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs took place in a context of an innovative, and therefore necessary unstable state. As with any new initiative, the development of resources and early groundbreaking work began with a small group of people working together with students to establish how to assess learning through a narrative frame. This work took place through teachers, parents, teacher-aides, advisers and researchers, working within a Ministry of Education contract to develop the narrative assessment and curriculum exemplar concept that would become 'real' for teachers and their learners. During this early phase, the formative evaluation highlighted particular strengths (e.g., enabling student learning to be portrayed in ways that other assessment tools could not readily capture, strengthened the links between home-school communication, and creating an integrated platform to assess student learning linked to key competencies, effective pedagogy and learning areas). Alongside this, areas of further development were suggested that involved teachers being more involved, the observations becoming more critical and analytical, links to the curriculum being made explicit, and teaching as inquiry be linked to the assessment. At this stage of the evaluation, the educators working on this development were also developing the exemplars and creating a Teachers' Guide that could profitably be used by others when working with their own students.

When the next phase of the evaluation commenced, the PD took part in a different geographical region with the intention to build on the original work. The newly contracted PD providers worked with SEITs, teachers and teacher-aides who had been nominated mainly because of the locality of the SEITs and needing to link the work to a specific child. A delay in the release of the Teachers' Guide, and the developed string of learning stories as exemplars, meant that the first cohort of teachers in these subsequent teacher professional development workshops could not fully access the earlier work.

There were other issues that created a challenging learning environment for the PD providers and teachers alike. The intention of the PD providers was to work with SEITs who would work with teachers and implement learning stories with a number of identified students.

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However, as it transpired, there was a major issue in recruiting teachers, in part because they were not aware of the initiative and felt 'overloaded', and in part because the principal had nominated the teacher without consultation with them.

The PD providers found themselves in an unusual situation of working with schools who had not directly asked to participate, but who needed to be partly coerced and cajoled into investing their time into the project. Through this phase of the evaluation the teachers gradually diminished in their participation and the SEITs and teacher-aides were left to devise 'learning stories' where they could. These learning stories were unrelated to assessment in so far as they were little more than describing a learning situation and documenting an occasion. A second cohort of teachers, generated through the GSE was more willing to engage and were motivated to link the concept to their pedagogy and assessment.

There was no strong evidence in this evaluation that learning stories were being used as an effective assessment tool to enhancing further learning or challenge teachers in their teaching practice. It was difficult to discern in any of the students' learning stories, progress over time, or measurable learning outcomes. More surprisingly, few learning stories identified areas of need or further learning focus. As an assessment tool, there was little apparent value in these case studies. From the learning stories examined, the interviews with SEITs, teacher-aides and teachers, and the questionnaire data from SEITs and teachers, it became clear that while the idea appealed, the implementation of learning stories or narrative assessment as an assessment strategy lacked sophistication. The evidence showed that teacher-aides, who largely undertook the process, did not have enough knowledge of the curriculum to link these assessments to the student's learning, although it is plausible that teachers could develop more effective learning stories over time.

The wheel diagram developed to support the educators to visualise the interconnectedness of learning objectives, key competencies and effective pedagogies was largely unused by the teachers and teacher-aides. Those SEITs who did use the New Zealand Curriculum, tended to create their own rectangular diagram, where it was easier for them to highlight the areas on their computers. Decisions around 'what key competency' and learning areas to highlight or foreground were made without consultation of the teacher, but rather, in terms of what seemed to fit. Instead of aiming at a particular area and working through a series of learning stories to see progression, the stories themselves were ad hoc and for many, retrospective.

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Professional development was part of this initiative and analysed through the use of CHAT analysis, where the impact and influence of variables associated with the introduction of narrative assessment to a new group of educators are considered in regard to general teacher learning and school reform. For a start, the difficulty of recruiting teachers, who were not internally motivated to participate, created obstacles for the PD providers and the teachers themselves. There were subsequent tensions for the SEITs and their need to recruit teachers and keep them 'on track'. The SEITs did not feel it was their role to provide PD to teachers and this highlighted the importance of clear roles and functions for specialist teachers. There was not a common understanding of what constituted learning stories or narrative assessment and unease around the use of templates, thus tensions arose around the artifact and object of the assessment activity. The perceived time-consuming nature of the task also raised tensions relating to division of labour. Teachers, teacher-aides and SEITs all contributed in some way to developing learning stories, but each in their role felt it was the responsibility of another. For the most part, it would give greater consistency if all had some role and responsibility for undertaking a learning story, but that the expectations around each of these were clear. For example, it did not work to have the teacher-aide attempt to link to the New Zealand Curriculum when they did not understand the concepts they were linking the story to.

These examples illustrate how internal conflicts and contradictions have the potential to create barriers to effective implementation. The CHAT analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the interrelated dimensions impacting on an innovative initiative. This provides a framework for making recommendations to ensure that the effect of innovations such as these, that have the potential to highlight student learning not seen through other assessment practices, can be maximised.

Suggestions and recommendations for further professional development on narrative assessment:

1. Training and professional learning in detailed <u>observational assessment</u> would enable better portrayal of learning, and would enhance the educator's ability to establish the level of student need.

2. The NZC is essential in the learning stories written by teachers, so that clear links to their <u>pedagogy</u> is evident.

3. The criteria for what constitutes successful exemplars should be used more explicitly when writing learning stories.

4. The Teachers' Guide and exemplars need to be readily accessible.

5. When teacher-aides and parents participate in writing learning stories, these are powerful illustrations of 'informal learning'. Therefore, not all learning stories necessarily need to be linked to the curriculum.

6. Professional development and learning for teachers must factor in the time to consider new ideas, to trial them in the classroom, to reflect on their impact and to collect and analyse data. Without the ability to spend focussed time on changing their practice, teachers choose either to opt out, or divert the responsibility of the work towards the teacher-aide.

7. In order for learning stories to become an effective, valid and credible narrative assessment tool, teachers need to make a distinction between narrating or describing an event, and systematically analysing learning progress and goals over time.

8. Examining the impact on all elements of a system when introducing new initiatives is necessary to understand how reform influences school and classroom practices.

The use of narrative assessment and learning stories in classrooms was identified by participants as a sound ideal and contributed to the positive identity of the young learner with high and very high needs. In all accounts where learning stories were undertaken, there was a level of pride for the learner expressed by those involved. In being able to acknowledge, through story and pictorial evidence, examples of the student productively learning at school, these documents became an affirming statement of meeting the needs of all learners. While the level of sophistication in the learning stories had not yet become a sharply focussed assessment tool, they did show that it directed the teacher-aides and SEITs towards the student learning, and it did enable teachers to become more specific about identifying curriculum areas and key competencies in relation to the student.

There was no evidence that the process of narrative assessment and learning stories created any harm, concern or discomfort for the students or educators involved, and with further time for development and refinement, the process has many aspects that could become a strong communication and assessment process.

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APPENDICES

Massey University
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars
For Students with Special Education Needs

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN EVALUATION

INSERT ADDRESS

Dear   ,

You are currently involved in a professional development initiative supported through Evaluation Associates. The Ministry of Education has contracted Evaluation Associates to support the professional learning of SEITs and teachers in the development work of narrative assessment in your school. The Ministry is also interested in how the development and use of narrative assessment through professional learning works in your school.

We are researchers from Massey University who have been contracted to evaluate this work.

Your name was given to us by Evaluation Associates as you are participating in the project. Last year the Ministry of Education sent the school a letter explaining that this evaluation would take place alongside the professional development.

To do this we have enclosed an information sheet, consent form and questionnaire. If you are willing to participate in this evaluation, please send back the informed consent sheet in the enclosed reply-paid envelope. Separate to this could you please complete the questionnaire at a convenient time. You can either post this in the second reply-paid envelope or if you prefer we can collect these at Kohia on April 28th at the professional development day organized by Evaluation Associates.

If you have any questions or concerns about this evaluation please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers. We appreciate your participation and wish you well in your work this year.

Kind regards,

Roseanna Bourke

Dr. Roseanna Bourke,
Centre for Educational Development
Email: R.Bourke@massey.ac.nz
Phone 06-3509304

Dr. Mandia Mentis,
College of Education, Albany
Email: M.Mentis@massey.ac.nz
Phone 09 4140800 ext 9841

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Massey University
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars
For Students with Special Education Needs

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - EDUCATORS

- I have read the participant information sheet and have had the details of the evaluation explained to me. I understand the information I share will be kept confidential and will only be used for this specific evaluation. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

- I give consent for my interview to be audio taped.

- I give consent for my comments to be included in the evaluation.

- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name - printed

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Massey University
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

Narrative Assessment Project

Questionnaire for Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEITS)

This questionnaire is for teachers (SEITs) involved in the narrative assessment project receiving professional development support through Evaluation Associates 2009. The questionnaire is specifically for teachers (SEITs) who support teachers of learners with High or Very High learning needs (as verified by the Ministry of Education) for receiving ORRS funding. Massey University researchers (Dr. Roseanna Bourke and Dr. Mandia Mentis) will visit you in your clusters during Term 3. The Ministry of Education wants to know how you as a SEIT are supported through professional development to try new ideas in assessment in partnership with teachers.

The Ministry of Education has developed a set of assessment exemplars to support teacher practice of narrative assessment. This questionnaire is part of the evaluation process of this initiative.

Please take 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire and send back to Massey University in the pre-paid envelope by **28 April 2009**. If you prefer, we can collect the questionnaire at the professional development day organized by Evaluation Associates.

> *This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the Human Ethics Committees. The researchers (Dr. Roseanna Bourke and Dr. Mandia Mentis) are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor (Ethics and Equity, telephone 0-6-350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz).*

Thank you for your time and contribution to developing an understanding of assessment for learners with High and Very High needs.

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Narrative Assessment Project

Questionnaire for Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEITS)

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. **My teaching experience:**
   - ❑ 0-5 years
   - ❑ 6-10 years
   - ❑ 11-20 years
   - ❑ 21+ years

2. **My SEIT experience:**
   - ❑ 0-3 months
   - ❑ 3-6 months
   - ❑ 6-12 months
   - ❑ 12 months or more

3. **My role in the school is:**
   - ❑ SENCO
   - ❑ Teacher
   - ❑ SEIT

4. **My qualifications:**
   - ❑ Diploma of Teaching
   - ❑ Bachelor Degree
   - ❑ Postgraduate Diploma
   - ❑ Masters Degree
   - ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

5. **I am:** ❑ Male ❑ Female

6. **I have qualifications or attended courses in special education or inclusive education:**
   - ❑ Yes ❑ No

7. **I most identify as:**
   - ❑ Pakeha ❑ Māori ❑ Pasifika ❑ European
   - ❑ Asian ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

8. **My teaching qualification was gained:**
   - ❑ In New Zealand
   - ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

GOALS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

9. What prompted your involvement in this professional development?

_____

_____

_____

_____

UNDERSTANDING OF ASSESSMENT
(*Please think about assessment in general with the students with High or Very High learning needs that you teach.*)

10. In general you assess when you:

	Mainly	Sometimes	Never
1. Don't know what to do to meet the learner's needs	❑	❑	❑
2. Don't know what the student knows	❑	❑	❑
3. Don't agree with the specialist assessment	❑	❑	❑
4. Are applying for resources or funding	❑	❑	❑
5. Want information for the parents	❑	❑	❑
6. Want to help students with their next step learning	❑	❑	❑
7. Don't agree with the parents' views	❑	❑	❑
8. Want to know what standard/level the student has achieved	❑	❑	❑
9. Want to know how the student compares with other students	❑	❑	❑
10. Want to know what the students' strengths and weaknesses are	❑	❑	❑
11. Want to know how to adapt your teaching	❑	❑	❑
12. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑

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11. How confident are you in your ability to assess students with High and Very High learning needs in relation to:

	Very confident	Confident	Unconfident	Very unconfident
1. Accessing resources	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Accessing funding	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. Knowing the student	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Preparation for an IEP	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Day-to-day learning and teaching	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. Identifying the student's strengths and interests	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Identifying the student's learning needs	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. Identifying teaching opportunities	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Providing feedback/discussion with parents	❑	❑	❑	❑
10. Providing feedback to the school	❑	❑	❑	❑
11. Providing feedback to the students	❑	❑	❑	❑
12. Assistive technology application	❑	❑	❑	❑
13. ORRS funding application	❑	❑	❑	❑

12. Who DOES the assessments of the student with High or Very High learning needs? Please rate the involvement of the following people:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
1. The teacher	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Teacher-aide	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. SENCO	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Principal/team leader	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Parent	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. GSE personnel	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑	❑

13. Who do you think SHOULD lead the assessment of learners with High or Very High learning needs? Please rate the involvement of the following people:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
1. The teacher	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. Teacher-aide	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. SENCO	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. Principal/team leader	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. Parent	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. GSE personnel	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑	❑

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14. **Please list the assessment tools or approaches you currently use for learners with High and Very High needs. Please also indicate the strengths and limitations of each.**

Tool/Approach	Strengths	Limitations

15. **How do you decide what to use for assessment?**

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16. **Does theory or ideas of learning drive your assessment practice? If so please explain briefly.**

_____

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NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT UNDERSTANDING

17. **Have you USED narrative assessment with students with High or Very High learning needs?**
    ❑ Yes   ❑ No

18. **Have you USED Learning Stories with students with High or Very High learning needs?**
    ❑ Yes   ❑ No

19. **What is your understanding of Learning Stories as an assessment tool? Please identify any pros and cons of this approach.**

_____

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20. **How does narrative assessment differ from other forms of assessment?**

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21. **Are you ever asked to use a particular tool or form of assessment in your school/ cluster that doesn't fit with how you see learning and assessment? Please explain.**

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22. **What are the ENABLERS to the introduction of narrative assessment in your school/cluster?**

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23. **What are the BARRIERS to the introduction of narrative assessment in your school/cluster?**

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24. **What do you want to achieve through participating in the professional development through Evaluation Associates?**

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25. What do you want to achieve through your partnership with teachers?

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26. How will you know if this has been achieved?

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27. What do you think narrative assessment might bring to your partnership with parents?

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28. How do you think parents might be involved in narrative assessment?

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Narrative Assessment Project

Questionnaire for Teachers

This questionnaire is for teachers involved in the narrative assessment project receiving professional development support through Evaluation Associates 2009. The questionnaire is specifically for teachers who teach learners with High or Very High learning needs (as verified by the Ministry of Education) for receiving ORRS funding. Massey University researchers (Dr. Roseanna Bourke and Dr. Mandia Mentis) will visit you in your school during Term 3. The Ministry of Education wants to know how you as a teacher are supported through professional develop to try new ideas in assessment.

The Ministry of Education has developed a set of assessment exemplars to support teacher practice of narrative assessment. This questionnaire is part of the evaluation process of this initiative.

Please take 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire and send back to Massey University in the pre-paid envelope by **28 April 2009**. If you prefer, we can collect the questionnaire at the professional development day organized by Evaluation Associates.

> *This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the Human Ethics Committees. The researchers (Dr. Roseanna Bourke and Dr. Mandia Mentis) are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor (Ethics and Equity, telephone 063505249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz).*

Thank you for your time and contribution to developing an understanding of assessment for learners with High and Very High needs.

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Narrative Assessment Project

Questionnaire for Teachers

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. **My teaching experience:** ❑ 0-5 years   ❑ 6-10 years

    ❑ 11-20 years   ❑ 21+ years

2. **My role in the school is:** ❑ SENCO   ❑ Teacher

3. **My qualifications:** ❑ Diploma of Teaching   ❑ Bachelor Degree

    ❑ Postgraduate Diploma   ❑ Masters Degree

    ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

4. **I am:** ❑ Male   ❑ Female

5. **I have qualifications or attended courses in special education or inclusive education:**
    ❑ Yes   ❑ No

6. **I most identify as:** ❑ Pakeha   ❑ Māori   ❑ Pasifika   ❑ European

    ❑ Asian   ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

7. **My teaching qualification was gained:**

    ❑ In New Zealand

    ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

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GOALS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

8.   What prompted your involvement in this professional development?

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UNDERSTANDING OF ASSESSMENT
(*Please think about assessment in general with the students with High or Very High learning needs that you teach.*)

9.   In general you assess when you:

	Mainly	Sometimes	Never
13. Don't know what to do to meet the learner's needs	❑	❑	❑
14. Don't know what the student knows	❑	❑	❑
15. Don't agree with the specialist assessment	❑	❑	❑
16. Are applying for resources or funding	❑	❑	❑
17. Want information for the parents	❑	❑	❑
18. Want to help students with their next step learning	❑	❑	❑
19. Don't agree with the parents' views	❑	❑	❑
20. Want to know what standard/level the student has achieved	❑	❑	❑
21. Want to know how the student compares with other students	❑	❑	❑
22. Want to know what the students' strengths and weaknesses are	❑	❑	❑
23. Want to know how to adapt your teaching	❑	❑	❑
24. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑

10. How confident are you in your ability to assess students with High and Very High learning needs in relation to:

	Very confident	Confident	Unconfident	Very unconfident
14. Accessing resources	❑	❑	❑	❑
15. Accessing funding	❑	❑	❑	❑
16. Knowing the student	❑	❑	❑	❑
17. Preparation for an IEP	❑	❑	❑	❑
18. Day-to-day learning and teaching	❑	❑	❑	❑
19. Identifying the student's strengths and interests	❑	❑	❑	❑
20. Identifying the student's learning needs	❑	❑	❑	❑
21. Identifying teaching opportunities	❑	❑	❑	❑
22. Providing feedback/discussion with parents	❑	❑	❑	❑
23. Providing feedback to the school	❑	❑	❑	❑
24. Providing feedback to the students	❑	❑	❑	❑
25. Assistive technology application	❑	❑	❑	❑
26. ORRS funding application	❑	❑	❑	❑

11. Who DOES the assessments of the student with High or Very High learning needs? Please rate the involvement of the following people:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
8. The teacher	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Teacher-aide	❑	❑	❑	❑
10. SENCO	❑	❑	❑	❑
11. Principal/team leader	❑	❑	❑	❑
12. Parent	❑	❑	❑	❑
13. GSE personnel	❑	❑	❑	❑
14. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑	❑

12. Who do you think SHOULD lead the assessment of learners with High or Very High learning needs? Please rate the involvement of the following people:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
8. The teacher	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Teacher-aide	❑	❑	❑	❑
10. SENCO	❑	❑	❑	❑
11. Principal/team leader	❑	❑	❑	❑
12. Parent	❑	❑	❑	❑
13. GSE personnel	❑	❑	❑	❑
14. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑	❑

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13. Please list the assessment tools or approaches you currently use for learners with High and Very High needs. Please also indicate the strengths and limitations of each.

Tool/Approach	Strengths	Limitations

14. How do you decide what to use for assessment?

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15. Does theory or ideas of learning drive your assessment practice? If so please explain briefly.

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NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT UNDERSTANDING

16. Have you USED narrative assessment with students with High or Very High learning needs?

❑ Yes   ❑ No

17. Have you USED Learning Stories with students with High or Very High learning needs?

❑ Yes   ❑ No

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18. **What is your understanding of Learning Stories as an assessment tool? Please identify any pros and cons of this approach**

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19. **How does narrative assessment differ from other forms of assessment?**

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20. **Are you ever asked to use a particular tool or form of assessment in your school that doesn't fit with how you see learning and assessment? Please explain.**

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21. **What are the ENABLERS to the introduction of narrative assessment in your school context?**

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22. **What are the BARRIERS to the introduction of narrative assessment in your school context?**

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23. **What do you want to achieve through participating in the professional development through Evaluation Associates?**

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24. What do you want to achieve through your partnership with SEITS?

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25. How will you know if this has been achieved?

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26. What do you think narrative assessment might bring to your partnership with parents?

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27. How do you think parents might be involved in narrative assessment?

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Narrative Assessment Project

Questionnaire for Teachers (September 2009)

This questionnaire is for teachers involved in the narrative assessment project receiving professional development support through Evaluation Associates 2009. The questionnaire is specifically for teachers who teach learners with High or Very High learning needs (as verified by the Ministry of Education) for receiving ORRS funding.

The researchers (Dr. Roseanna Bourke, Victoria University; and Dr. Mandia Mentis, Massey University) will visit some of you in your school in November. The Ministry of Education wants to know how you as a teacher are supported through the professional development to try new ideas in assessment.

Please take 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire and send back to Massey University in the pre-paid envelope by **Tuesday 6 October 2009**.

> *This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the Human Ethics Committees. The researchers (Dr. Roseanna Bourke and Dr. Mandia Mentis) are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor (Ethics and Equity, telephone 063505249, email* humanethics@massey.ac.nz*).*

Thank you for your time and contribution to developing an understanding of assessment for learners with High and Very High needs.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

1. **My teaching experience:**
   - ❑ 0-5 years
   - ❑ 6-10 years
   - ❑ 11-20 years
   - ❑ 21+ years

2. **My role in the school is:**
   - ❑ SENCO
   - ❑ Teacher

3. **My qualifications:**
   - ❑ Diploma of Teaching
   - ❑ Bachelor Degree
   - ❑ Postgraduate Diploma
   - ❑ Masters Degree
   - ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

4. **I am:**
   - ❑ Male
   - ❑ Female

5. **I have qualifications or attended courses in special education or inclusive education:**
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No

6. **I most identify as:**
   - ❑ Pakeha
   - ❑ Māori
   - ❑ Pasifika
   - ❑ European
   - ❑ Asian
   - ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

7. **My teaching qualification was gained:**
   - ❑ In New Zealand
   - ❑ Other (*please state*): _____

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GOALS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

8. What prompted your involvement in this professional development?

_____

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_____

UNDERSTANDING OF ASSESSMENT
(*Please think about assessment in general with the students with High or Very High learning needs that you teach.*)

9. In general you assess when you:

	Mainly	Sometimes	Never
25. Don't know what to do to meet the learner's needs	❏	❏	❏
26. Don't know what the student knows	❏	❏	❏
27. Don't agree with the specialist assessment	❏	❏	❏
28. Are applying for resources or funding	❏	❏	❏
29. Want information for the parents	❏	❏	❏
30. Want to help students with their next step learning	❏	❏	❏
31. Don't agree with the parents' views	❏	❏	❏
32. Want to know what standard/level the student has achieved	❏	❏	❏
33. Want to know how the student compares with other students	❏	❏	❏
34. Want to know what the students' strengths and weaknesses are	❏	❏	❏
35. Want to know how to adapt your teaching	❏	❏	❏
36. Other (*please specify*): _____	❏	❏	❏

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10. How confident are you in your ability to assess students with High and Very High learning needs in relation to:

	Very confident	Confident	Unconfident	Very unconfident
27. Accessing resources	❑	❑	❑	❑
28. Accessing funding	❑	❑	❑	❑
29. Knowing the student	❑	❑	❑	❑
30. Preparation for an IEP	❑	❑	❑	❑
31. Day-to-day learning and teaching	❑	❑	❑	❑
32. Identifying the student's strengths and interests	❑	❑	❑	❑
33. Identifying the student's learning needs	❑	❑	❑	❑
34. Identifying teaching opportunities	❑	❑	❑	❑
35. Providing feedback/discussion with parents	❑	❑	❑	❑
36. Providing feedback to the school	❑	❑	❑	❑
37. Providing feedback to the students	❑	❑	❑	❑
38. Assistive technology application	❑	❑	❑	❑
39. ORRS funding application	❑	❑	❑	❑

11. Who DOES the assessments of the student with High or Very High learning needs? Please rate the involvement of the following people:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
15. The teacher	❑	❑	❑	❑
16. Teacher-aide	❑	❑	❑	❑
17. SENCO	❑	❑	❑	❑
18. Principal/team leader	❑	❑	❑	❑
19. Parent	❑	❑	❑	❑
20. GSE personnel	❑	❑	❑	❑
21. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑	❑

12. Who do you think SHOULD lead the assessment of learners with High or Very High learning needs? Please rate the involvement of the following people:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
15. The teacher	❑	❑	❑	❑
16. Teacher-aide	❑	❑	❑	❑
17. SENCO	❑	❑	❑	❑
18. Principal/team leader	❑	❑	❑	❑
19. Parent	❑	❑	❑	❑
20. GSE personnel	❑	❑	❑	❑
21. Other (*please specify*): _____	❑	❑	❑	❑

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13. Please list the assessment tools or approaches you currently use for learners with High and Very High needs. Please also indicate the strengths and limitations of each.

Tool/Approach	Strengths	Limitations

14. How do you decide what to use for assessment?

_____

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15. Does theory or ideas of learning drive your assessment practice? If so please explain briefly.

_____

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NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT UNDERSTANDING

16. Have you USED narrative assessment with students with High or Very High learning needs?
  ❑ Yes ❑ No

17. Have you USED Learning Stories with students with High or Very High learning needs?
  ❑ Yes ❑ No

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18. **What is your understanding of Learning Stories as an assessment tool? Please identify any pros and cons of this approach**

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

19. **How does narrative assessment differ from other forms of assessment?**

    _____

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20. **Are you ever asked to use a particular tool or form of assessment in your school that doesn't fit with how you see learning and assessment? Please explain.**

    _____

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    _____

21. **What are the ENABLERS to the introduction of narrative assessment in your school context?**

    _____

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    _____

22. **What are the BARRIERS to the introduction of narrative assessment in your school context?**

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23. **What do you want to achieve through participating in the professional development through Evaluation Associates?**

    _____

    _____

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24. How will you know if this has been achieved?

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25. What do you think narrative assessment might bring to your partnership with parents?

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26. How do you think parents might be involved in narrative assessment?

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Narrative Assessment Project

Pre-PD Session Telephone Interview Questions with SEITs

Brief intro:
I understand that you are involved in the professional development initiative with Evaluation Associates around using learning stories as an assessment with learners with High and Very High needs? The Ministry of Education has contracted researchers at Massey University to evaluate aspects of this initiative and this interview is part of that evaluation. We would like to gather some background information prior to the start of the professional development work. Would you be happy to have a 5 minute telephone chat and give your views on two specific questions?

1. **What have been the challenges for you in getting started on this project?**
   (This question is more around the project itself)
   Probe:
   - *How did you come to be involved in this project?*
   - *What are/were some of the issues or tensions in getting going?*
   - *Who is participating in your particular school context/cluster and how is that being managed?*
   - *What information have you received about the purpose or process of this project?*
   - *What do you see as some of the barriers and enablers in this project)*

2. **What expectations do you have in regard to using narrative assessment in this project?**
   (This question is more around narrative assessment and learning stories)

   Probe:
   - *Do you have any previous experience of using narrative assessment or learning stories or knowledge of it being used? If so – how, in what context?*
   - *What are your views of using narrative assessment/ learning stories with learners with High and very High needs?*
   - *What outcomes are you hoping for regarding the use of narrative assessment?*
   - *For you, the teacher, parents, students, school?*
   - *What do you see as the strengths/ weaknesses or enablers/ barriers in using narrative assessment in this project?*

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Massey University
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Narrative Assessment Project

Post-PD Session Telephone Interview Questions with SEITs

Brief intro:
Thank you for agreeing to do a follow-up telephone interview regarding the professional development initiative with Evaluation Associates around using learning stories as an assessment with learners with High and Very High needs? Just to recap, the Ministry of Education has contracted researchers at Massey University to evaluate aspects of this initiative and this interview is part of that evaluation. We would like to have a follow-up interview not that you have attended the professional development day. Would you be happy to have a 5 minute telephone chat and give your views on two specific questions?

Second phone conversation with SIETs

1. How did your understanding of Narrative Assessment change following or during the PD day on the 28th?

2. From the day, what significantly impacted on your understanding of narrative assessment?

3. What do you see your role as a SEIT being in this project? Has this changed at all after the PD day?
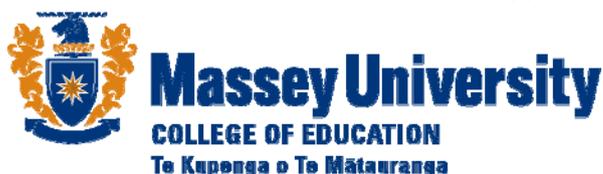
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Massey University
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Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars
For Students with Special Education Needs

INFORMATION SHEET - Educators

The Ministry of Education has developed narrative assessment exemplars for learners with special education needs. The exemplars show how to assess student achievement within Level 1 of the New Zealand Curriculum and support teachers to assist the learning of students.

Massey University researchers, Dr Roseanna Bourke and Dr Mandia Mentis, have been evaluating how useful narrative assessment and learning stories are for teachers. The first part of this evaluation involved a national questionnaire and fieldwork interviews with teachers in primary, secondary and special schools who use narrative assessment/learning stories. This next phase involves talking with SEITs and teachers who are involved in the professional development of the narrative assessment and learning stories approach.

You have been identified as a SEIT or a teacher who is involved in the professional development initiative through Evaluation Associates.

As part of the evaluation we would appreciate talking with you further and invite you to participate in an interview at your school to share with the researchers your professional development experience and your use of narrative assessment and learning stories for learners with High and Very High needs. The interview should last approximately one hour and will be audio-taped for transcribing purposes.

The information you provide in the interview will be analysed by the researchers and included anonymously in a report to the Ministry of Education. All information you provide is confidential, read only by the researchers, and in accordance with standard Massey University research procedures will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for a period of five years and then destroyed.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate in the evaluation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
- decline to answer any particular question/s;
- withdraw yourself and the information you have contributed at any time up until the report is written;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used.
- be given a summary of the findings when the evaluation is concluded.

If you have any questions or concerns about this evaluation please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers:

Dr. Roseanna Bourke,
Centre for Educational Development
Email: R.Bourke@massey.ac.nz
Phone 06-3509304

Dr. Mandia Mentis,
College of Education, Albany
Email: M.Mentis@massey.ac.nz
Phone 09 4140800 ext 9841

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Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars
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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – EDUCATORS

- I have read the participant information sheet and have had the details of the evaluation explained to me. I understand the information I share will be kept confidential and will only be used for this specific evaluation. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

- I give consent for my interview to be audio taped.

- I give consent for my comments to be included in the evaluation.

- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

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INFORMATION SHEET - Educators

The Ministry of Education has developed narrative assessment exemplars for learners with special education needs. The exemplars show how to assess student achievement within Level 1 of the New Zealand Curriculum and support teachers to assist the learning of students.

The researchers, Dr Roseanna Bourke, Victoria University and Dr Mandia Mentis, Massey University, have been evaluating how useful narrative assessment and learning stories are for teachers. The first part of this evaluation involved a national questionnaire and fieldwork interviews with teachers in primary, secondary and special schools who use narrative assessment/learning stories. This next phase involves talking with SEITs and teachers who are involved in the professional development of the narrative assessment and learning stories approach.

You have been identified as a teacher who is involved in the professional development initiative through Evaluation Associates. As part of the evaluation we invite you to complete two short questionnaires and to participate in an interview at your school to share with the researchers your professional development experience and your use of narrative assessment and learning stories for learners with High and Very High needs. The questionnaires should take no longer than 15 minutes and the interview (if agreed to) should last approximately one hour and will be audio-taped for transcribing purposes.

The information you provide will be analysed by the researchers and included anonymously in a report to the Ministry of Education. All information you provide is confidential, read only by the researchers, and in accordance with standard University research procedures will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for a period of five years and then destroyed.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate in the evaluation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
- decline to answer any particular question/s;
- withdraw yourself and the information you have contributed at any time up until the report is written;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given a summary of the findings when the evaluation is concluded.

If you have any questions or concerns about this evaluation please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers:

Dr. Roseanna Bourke,
Victoria University
Email: Roseanna.Bourke@vuw.ac.nz
Phone 04-463 9773 (direct dial)

Dr. Mandia Mentis,
College of Education, Albany
Email: M.Mentis@massey.ac.nz
Phone 09 4140800 ext 9841

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Narrative Assessment Project

Phase 3 Fieldwork: Implementation of learning stories through professional development

Structured interview schedule – SEITs & Teachers
8–11 June, 2009
3- 6 November, 2009

Date	
Interviewer's name	
Verify informed consent gained	
Name of SEIT/Teacher	
School	
Number of students involved in trialling learning stories	
Attended PD day	
Years of experience working with special needs/ high needs	
Background qualifications	
PD around assessment/ special needs	

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SEITs

1. How have you been going with the development of learning stories since the PD day? (or if not attended the PD) since you started your work on learning stories?

2. Describe the process you are using to carry out a learning story.

3. Is anything 'different' about this form of assessment that you need professional learning support?

4. Is anything 'the same' that you currently use that you are incorporating into your work with learning stories?

5. What is your role in working with teachers/ SEITs around these learning stories? What do you do?

6. Has your role with the teacher changed in any way since being involved in learning stories? (for SEIT) Or Has your teaching changed as a result of introducing learning stories? (for Teacher)

7. Is this (learning stories) a form of assessment? (for SEIT) Do you focus on the learner in a different way? (for Teacher)

8. What for you are the positive/ valuable aspects of using learning stories?
(Do you think they are useful? How? In what ways?)

9. What for you are the negative / problematic aspects of using learning stories?

10. What do you consider are the key/essential ingredients for successfully using learning stories in your context?

11. What do you consider are the possible barriers/ difficulties in using learning stories in your context?

12. Do you know anything more about the learner through using learning stories than you did before?
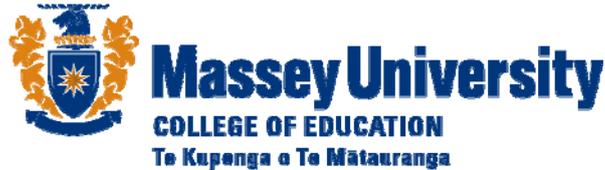
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Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars
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Final Information letter for the Narrative Project Evaluation

INSERT ADDRESS
DATE

Dear

Evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs – FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in the evaluation of Narrative Assessment and Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs.

A final questionnaire is enclosed, this should only take around 15 minute to complete. For those of you who have not yet returned an information sheet and consent form, we have also enclosed a copy of these for you. Please send back the completed documents in the enclosed reply-paid envelope.

If you have any questions or concerns about this evaluation please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers. We appreciate your participation and wish you well in your work this year.

Kind regards,

Mandia Mentis

Dr. Roseanna Bourke,
Victoria University
Email: Roseanna.Bourke@vuw.ac.nz
Phone 04-463 9773 (direct dial)

Dr. Mandia Mentis,
College of Education, Albany
Email: M.Mentis@massey.ac.nz
Phone 09 4140800 ext 9841

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Narrative Assessment Project

Questionnaire for SEITS and Teachers (October 2009)

This is the final questionnaire for teachers and SEITs involved in the narrative assessment project. The questionnaire is specifically designed for teachers who teach learners with High or Very High learning needs (as verified by the Ministry of Education) for receiving ORRS funding.

The researchers Dr. Roseanna Bourke (Victoria University) and Dr. Mandia Mentis (Massey University) are evaluating the implementation of narrative assessment and learning stories in schools, and the professional development support required to do this.

Please take 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire and send back to Massey University in the pre-paid envelope by **Tuesday 3 November**, 2009.

> *This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the Human Ethics Committees. The researchers (Dr. Roseanna Bourke and Dr. Mandia Mentis) are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor (Ethics and Equity, telephone 063505249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz).*

Thank you very much for the time and effort taken to complete this questionnaire and for your contribution in sharing your views on the trialling and development of narrative assessment and learning stories.

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

1. **My role in the school is:** ❏ SENCO ❏ Teacher

❏ SEIT ❏ Principal

2. **Which cohort for the PD did you participate in? (please tick box)**

Cohort 1 (commencing January 2009) ❏

Cohort 2 (commencing June 2009) ❏

3. **Was your participation voluntary?**

❏ Yes ❏ No

4. **What did you learn through your involvement in the professional development?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING STORIES
(*Please think about your use of learning stories during your professional development and rate the usefulness of the following supports to enable you to use learning stories effectively*)

5. **How useful were the following supports:**

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful
37. Face to face meetings with PD providers	❏	❏	❏
38. Template for using learning stories	❏	❏	❏
39. Feedback on learning stories	❏	❏	❏
40. Online/paper exemplars	❏	❏	❏
41. Email support from PD providers	❏	❏	❏
42. Literature and readings	❏	❏	❏
43. Draft Teachers' Guide	❏	❏	❏
44. School support	❏	❏	❏
45. Support from other teachers	❏	❏	❏
46. GSE support	❏	❏	❏
47. Other (*please specify*): _____	❏	❏	❏

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6. **Has your understanding of learning stories changed?**

❑ Yes ❑ No

If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. **What do you consider are the ADVANTAGES of using learning stories?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. **What do you consider are the DISADVANTAGES of using learning stories?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **How do learning stories differ from other forms of assessment that you currently use?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. **What is the value of using learning stories as an assessment approach for students?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. **How does using learning stories as an assessment approach influence and support student learning?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

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ROLES

12.   What is the student's role in developing learning stories?

_____

_____

_____

_____

13.   What is the teacher aide's role in developing learning stories?

_____

_____

_____

_____

14.   What is the parent's role in developing learning stories?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15.   What is the teacher/ SEIT's role in developing learning stories?

_____

_____

_____

_____

16.   What are the enablers to incorporating narrative assessment in your school context?

_____

_____

_____

_____

17.   What are the barriers to incorporating narrative assessment in your school context?

_____

_____

_____

_____

18.   Did narrative assessment support partnerships with parents? If yes, how?

❑   Yes   ❑   No

_____

_____

_____

_____

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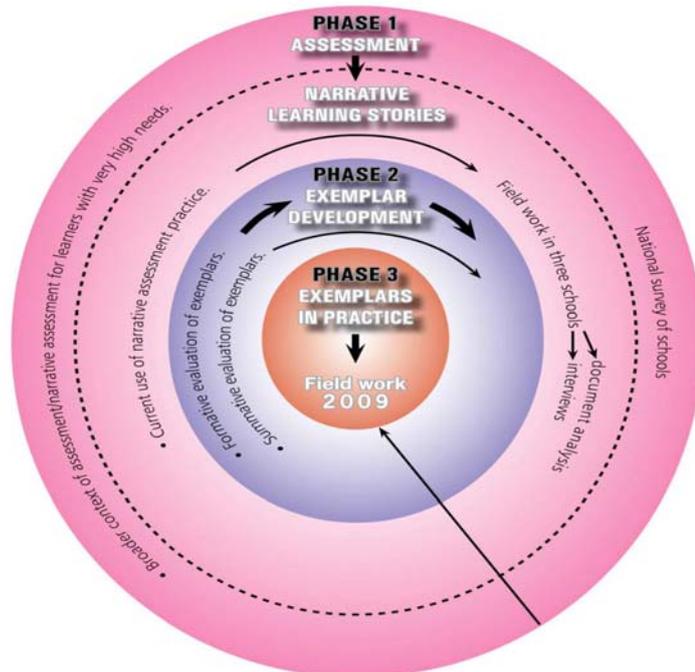
Criteria for successful exemplars

- Progress strengthening learning over time
- Authentic powerful learning voice
- Learning made explicit and specific
- Teaching as inquiry
- Credit based
- Linked to the curriculum
- Student centred assessment

PHASE 1 & 2

METHODOLOGY

- National Survey:
  29-item questionnaire was sent to all New Zealand primary and secondary schools [964 returns]
- Initial Fieldwork:
  Interviews with teachers who have started using narrative assessment and learning stories
- Document analysis of curriculum exemplars

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The national survey

964 participants

68% primary

16% secondary

7% special schools

5% intermediate

1% area schools; 1% correspondence

Assessment of students with high needs usually led by:

teachers 95%

teacher-aides 72%; GSE 72%

SENCO 59%

The national survey

- Purpose of assessment - Main reasons:

    Next step learning (89%);

    To identify students strengths and weaknesses (78%);

    level of students achievements (71%);

    To adapt teaching (70%)

- Most used of 24 identified assessments:

    collecting examples of work (910) & observations (910)

    anecdotal records (851) and portfolios (770)

- Use of learning stories

    305 out of 964 reported

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Initial Fieldwork

Teachers who were currently trialling learning stories:
- 6 teachers
- 3 primary schools
- 3 geographical areas

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Initial Fieldwork

"*Students don't fit into boxes*" (Teacher)

"*Parents like it. It's the proof. We're not just making it up. It's the evidence*" (teacher)

More userfriedly for teacher, parent and student as it was 'jargon free'

Motivating and raised self esteem of the child

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Phase 2
Resource development

Documentation analysis:

- A guide for teachers
- 23 exemplars
  88 learning stories across the three sectors

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Resource development
KEY FINDINGS

- *Evidence based stories*
- *Identity and Role of observer/narrator*
- *Value of Photographs*
- *Technology support*
- *Reflective questions*
- *Learning String*

- *Value of the website*
- *Value of the overviews*
- *Analysis*
- *Observations* are key
- *The timeframe*
- *The Guide for Teachers*

Phase 3

Narrative assessment in practice

Methodology: ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

used as a means to explore a network of activity,
premised on the belief that learning within these systems
is socially situated and mediated by artefacts.

It is an evaluative framework that enables researchers
and practitioners to understand systems,
and themselves in these, and has been recently linked
to professional development
initiatives in educational settings

(Crossouard, 2009; Rizzo, 2003)

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ACTIVITY SYSTEM

ARTEFACTS/ TOOLS

SUBJECT/S　　　　　　　　　　　**OBJECT** → **OUTCOME**
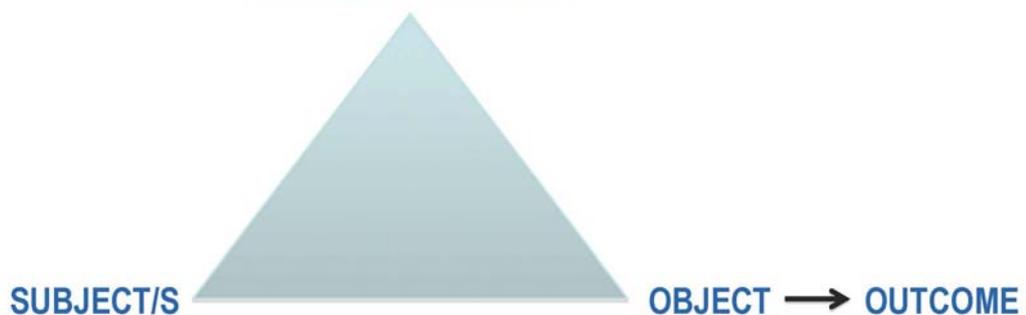
Engestrom (1999)

ACTIVITY SYSTEM

ARTEFACTS/ TOOLS

Instrument or means relating subject to object to produce outcome

SUBJECT

The individual or sub-group whose agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis

OBJECT → **OUTCOME**

raw material, problem space at which activity is directed and which is transformed into outcomes with the help of tools

---

ACTIVITY SYSTEM

SUBJECT

→

RULES   **COMMUNITY**   **ROLES/ DIVISION OF LABOUR**

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ACTIVITY SYSTEM

SUBJECT

RULES
regulations, norms, and conventions that constrain actions and interventions within the activity system

COMMUNITY
Multiple individuals; subgroups who share the same general object

ROLES/ DIVISION OF LABOUR
horizontal division of tasks between members of the community, and vertical division of power and status,

ACTIVITY SYSTEM

ARTEFACTS/ TOOLS

SUBJECT

OBJECT → OUTCOME

RULES

COMMUNITY

ROLES/ DIVISION OF LABOUR

Engestrom (1999)

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ACTIVITY SYSTEM   example 1

ARTEFACTS/ TOOLS

LEARNING STORIES

SUBJECT

TEACHERS

OBJECT → OUTCOME

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

RULES   COMMUNITY   ROLES/ DIVISION OF LABOUR

A communication tool to discuss learning

I think it opens communication with the family, child and the teacher. And I've been teaching many, many years and last year was probably one of the best communicating years I've had. (Teacher, 2008)

ACTIVITY SYSTEM example 2

ARTEFACTS/ TOOLS

LEARNING STORIES

SUBJECT

TEACHERS

OBJECT → OUTCOME

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

RULES   COMMUNITY   ROLES/ DIVISION OF LABOUR

Policy/practice/values
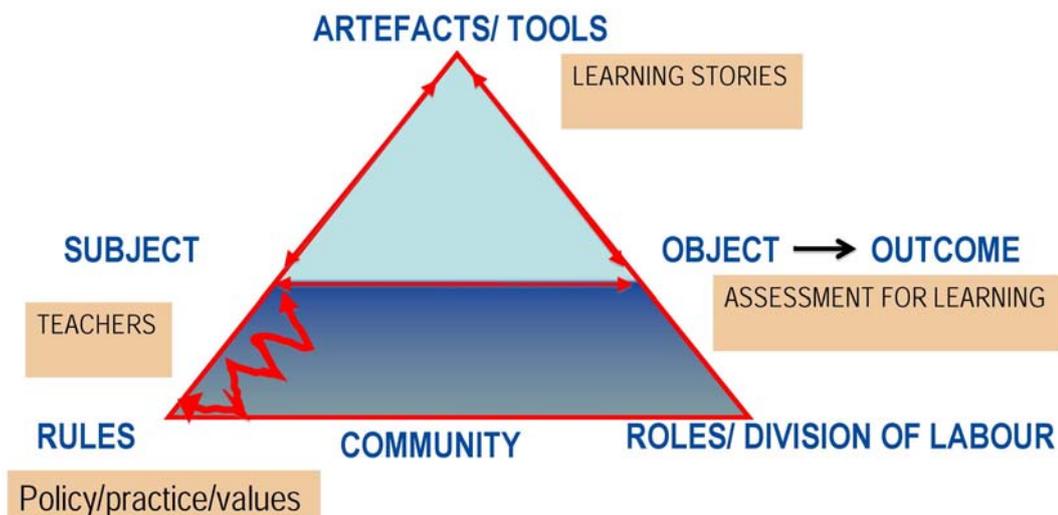
42% of schools do not use this data to evaluate the success of the school's curriculum and teaching programmes

ACTIVITY SYSTEM example 3

ARTEFACTS/ TOOLS

LEARNING STORIES

SUBJECT

TEACHERS

OBJECT ⟶ OUTCOME

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

RULES   **COMMUNITY**   **ROLES/ DIVISION OF LABOUR**

Tensions relating to WHO assesses
(teacher-aide, parent, learner?)

Teachers 95%, Teachers-aide 72%, GSE 72%, Senco 59%
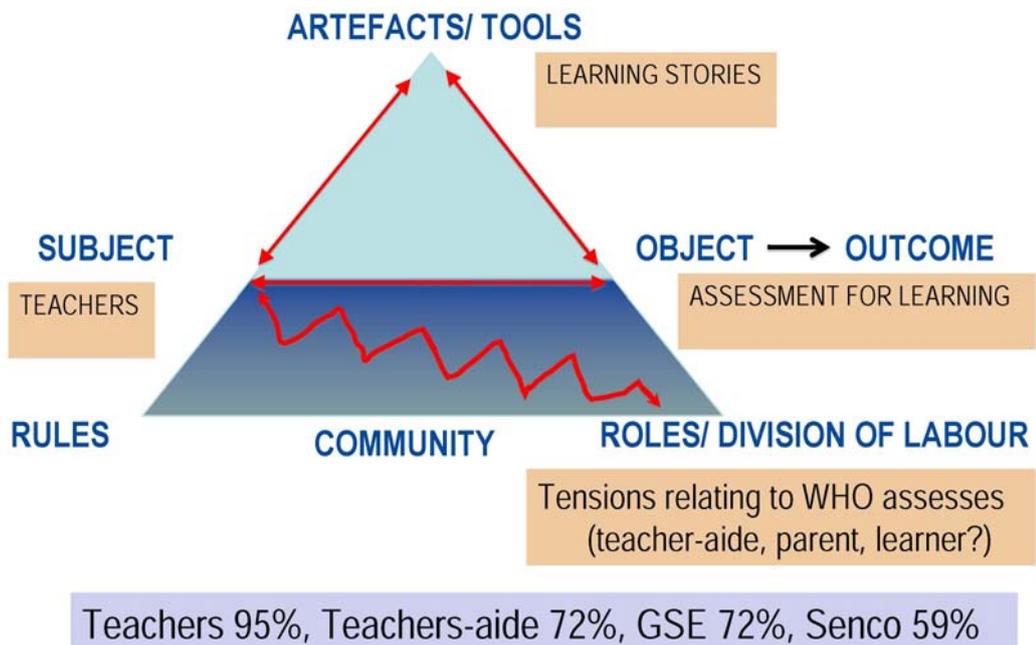
Documenting the process

Milestone reports:

Bourke, R., Mentis, M., Poskitt, J. (2007) Research and Evaluation of narrative assessment and curriculum exemplars for students with special education needs. **Milestone 1 report.** Massey University

- the development of shared criteria for successful exemplars
- early formative feedback around 6 exemplars
- the development of a national questionnaire

Bourke, R., Mentis, M., Poskitt, J. & Todd, L. (2008) Research and Evaluation of narrative assessment and curriculum exemplars for students with special education needs. **Milestone 2 reports.** Massey University.

- Narrative Assessment: A guide for Teachers
- a series of 23 Exemplars (88 Learning
- stories)

Bourke, R. & **Mentis, M.** (2008) *A national survey of assessment practices in New Zealand primary and secondary schools for students with special education needs.*
Report to the Ministry of Education. Massey University.

- results from the 964 respondents to a national survey sent to primary, secondary and special schools in NZ

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Manuscript

Using an Activity Theory framework to evaluate the professional development to support teachers in a new assessment initiative: A changing mosaic

In an initiative introducing narrative assessment through learning stories into regular schools for students with high and very high needs, specialist teachers known as special education itinerant teachers (SEITs), worked with professional development (PD) providers across schools within their network. The SEITs are itinerate and work across schools, thereby working in multiple contexts and they engage with different groups of educators and parents in relation to a child. When these different groups become united within a re-formed context for a particular purpose (e.g., the narrative assessment PD project), it is suggested they should be conceptualised as separate systems that need to be understood. These teachers work in different ways, in different roles according to the context. A 3-year evaluation of the introduction of narrative assessment, framed through Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), highlights some tensions associated with the professional development, the assessment, and the different roles of the teachers, teacher-aides and SEITs. On the one hand, formative assessment, through the use of narrative assessment created highlights for the students and their parents; while on the other hand, role conflict challenging the traditional role of assessment for the educators emerged.

▪ Introduction

The assessment of young people with significant learning difficulties in primary and secondary schools is a complex area. Often the learning progress made by these students, on the surface, appears small, incremental and difficult for educators, teachers and educational psychologists to portray effectively. This process is also hindered by the inability of standardised assessment tools to convey the complexity of learning in a meaningful, positive frame. Alternative forms of assessment therefore seem needed.

Narrative assessment specifically for learners with high and very high needs has recently been introduced in primary and secondary schools in New Zealand, and is being trialled through professional development providers contracted by the Ministry of Education with a group of teachers and specialist teachers, including educational psychologists. Narrative assessment, in this example, is defined as "an authentic account of student learning in relation to the key competencies, the learning areas, and effective pedagogy in The New Zealand Curriculum" (MOE, 2009, p. 6). This practice evolves in complex learning communities, where the perspectives, different roles and orientations of members in these communities can create tensions and contradictions, but through this process, learning occurs. *Learning needs to occur in a changing mosaic of interconnected activity systems which are energized by their own inner contradictions (Engeström, 2001, p. 140).*

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In such cases, where human activity occurs in multiple contexts, but is focussed around a re-formed context for a particular purpose (e.g., the narrative assessment PD project reported on in this paper), then each system needs to be understood in relation to this new context. Activity theory is a useful means to explore these multiple contexts, to understand interactions at both "micro and macro levels" (Leadbetter, 2005, p.18), and to explore changing roles and cultures in action (Webb & Jones, 2009). This approach is based on the view that outcomes arise out of dynamic interactions between a number of different elements within a complex socio-cultural system. These elements include the *subject, object, outcome* and *mediating tools* at the primary level of analysis of the system. At an expanded level of analysis of the activity system—*rules, community* and *division of labour* are analysed.

The use of activity systems help to explore and articulate the transformation of teacher and student roles in a change process such as the PD initiative reported here to introduce a different form of assessment. Such exploration leads to better understanding of how and why contradictions exist, and are often perceived as barriers to school reform.

- ▪ **Professional Development Initiatives in Formative Assessment**

This paper reports on a professional development (PD) programme to introduce narrative assessment through the use of learning stories. Narrative assessment is viewed as being able to increase the involvement of teachers, teacher-aides, parents and students in the assessment process, and provide a mechanism for greater empowerment and self-determination in the learning process (Cullen, Williamson, & Lepper, 2005). The development of strong, respectful and positive relationships between teachers and learner, between teacher and parent, and between teachers, parents and educational professionals is a critical factor in a successful formative assessment process and such relationships have been shown to be enhanced through the use of learning stories (Cullen, Williamson, & Lepper, 2005). The move away from an expert-model in assessment allows for greater self-determination for the learner, and increases the opportunities and the context for personalising learning.

It is argued that PD programmes in education that effectively support teacher learning are designed to enable teachers to inquire into their own practice (Bourke, McGee, & O'Neill, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006), often stimulated by the need to implement a new Government strategy or policy initiative (Kelly, 2006). In many cases, educators outside of the school (inservice teacher educators, PD providers, critical friends, researchers) support this process. In these contexts, PD providers and inservice teacher-educators constantly find ways of:

- "Creating intentional and positive professional learning experiences for teachers;
- Recognizing the difficulties of instant success;
- Acknowledging that learning in an authentic educational environment is complex and ill-defined"
  (Bourke, McGee & O'Neill, 2008, p. 4).

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When new initiatives are introduced into schools by the Ministry of Education, such as this example of narrative assessment through learning stories, the effect is that while they have the potential to create 'novel' catalysts for change, these are not necessarily viewed as a positive change by the teachers. Within a school system, individual and institutional learning occurs when an initiative can be sustained long-term, and where such changes are platformed on a shared understanding for the rationale and purpose. In addition, an implementation plan that can be readily actioned in the authentic setting of a school is required. As Roth and Lee (2007) have noted, when a new tool or division of labour is introduced into a setting, it creates 'possibilities' for all forms of learning:

> Learning occurs whenever a novel practice, artifact, tool or division of labor at the level of the individual or group within an activity system constitutes a new possibility for others (as resource, form of action to be emulated) leading to an increase in generalized action possibilities and therefore to collective (organizational, societal, cultural) learning (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 205).

Professional development programmes aimed at supporting teachers' use of formative assessment have increasingly focussed on teacher pedagogy and practice (Black & Wiliam, 2006; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). The premise of 'formative' assessment is that it is defined more by the *function* it serves rather than the assessment strategy itself. At times, assessments that may be intended or appear to be formative (e.g., interviews) are used in a summative way if the results of these assessments are not used to support further student learning. Our findings from questionnaires to teachers suggested that both the reasons for assessment, and the methods used, are consistent with their aspirations for a formative assessment approach for learners with high needs to allow for learning to be made visible. However, teachers also reported using over 24 assessment tools for students with high and very high needs (Bourke, Mentis and Todd, in press), and arguably do not need another assessment tool.

Therefore, the PD providers, contracted to support PD for teachers in narrative assessment and learning stories, reported low level commitment and interest in participation. In fact, teacher participation rates during the first phase of the PD implementation markedly fell to such a level that specialist teachers and teacher-aides became the subjects of the PD. For those teachers involved, the introduction of a new initiative created a dissonance in the teachers' understanding of what the assessment is, how it differs or is the same as other forms of assessment they use, and how they incorporate it into their current repertoire of assessment practice. According to Black and Wiliam (1998) when changes in teaching practice through formative assessment occur, they do so slowly, and teachers integrating formative assessment into their day-to-day work need practise "through sustained programmes of professional development and support" (p.15). However, this project also points out, that for this sustained PD programme to have any relevance for the teachers, they must be able to identify with the mediating artifact (i.e., learning stories and narrative assessment), and be motivated to engage with it. The development via PD of formative assessment within one's practice may, or is likely to, require fundamental changes.

To really enable formative assessment to work in classrooms teachers are likely to have to play a different role and function within the classroom and correspondingly, so too do the students. Teachers will in all probability become challenged with regards their views about assessment, and about learning. Even when teachers familiar with and expert at using formative assessment have a new classroom of students who are not used to formative assessment, it seems to be a difficult transition for both teacher and student while 'roles' are adjusted (Webb & Jones, 2009). The phenomenon of 'adjustment' and different role expectations within an activity system has been identified in other teacher PD settings. For example, Davies, Howes, and Farrell (2008) identified tensions for educational psychologists who participated in a PD project aimed at supporting teaches at a systematic level in schools, while their employing bodies wanted them to work at an individual case level. Davies et al. noted that psychologists in their study did not get release time from their casework which was "experienced by the educational psychologists as a contradiction between achieving the object of their joint activities with teachers, and the rules that were laid down for their professional working in schools" (p. 410).   In other words, there were incongruencies in this situation between 'object' and 'role' (if systemic work is seen as object) or between artifact and role, assuming instead that systemic working versus individual case-work is understood as the artifact.

- ## Activity Theory

Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1993) is used as a means to explore a network of activity, premised on the belief that learning within these systems is socially situated and mediated by artifacts. CHAT provides a mechanism to explore multiple roles and functions within a dynamic social and educational system. Vygosty's work (1978) undertaken in the 1920s and 1930s identified the mediating role of artifacts (objects and people) in learning and development, and his concept of cultural mediation. Engeström refers to this as first generation, Cultural-historical activity theory, further developed by Leont'ev (1981) who explored the individual action and collective activity (Figure 1).
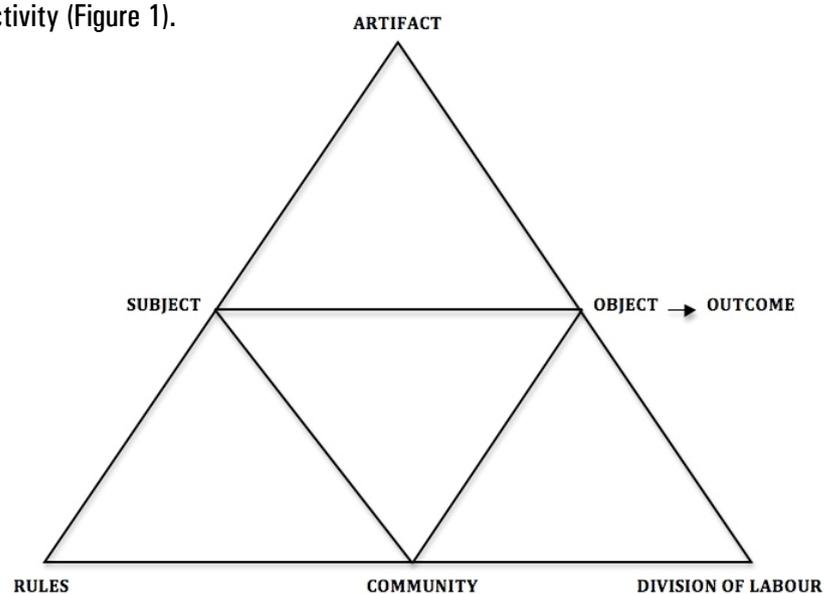

Figure 1: Model of an Activity System

The use of CHAT as an evaluative framework enables researchers and practitioners to understand systems, and themselves within them, and has been recently linked to professional development initiatives in educational settings (Crossouard, 2009; Rizzo, 2003; Webb & Jones, 2009). These have proved useful to explore in school-based settings. Often a range of tensions and contradictions for teachers, teacher-aides, learners, parents, specialists and principals are inherent when change is implemented, and yet they are arguably attempting to achieve the same goal, that of supporting student learning. In this example, SEITS are supporting teacher-aides to enhance student learning and their opportunities to learn, through narrative assessment. However, teachers, teacher-aides and SEITs focus on different and sometimes opposing mediating tools to do this. In Crossouard's (2009) evaluation of two professional development initiatives, she found that activity systems are potentially useful for both teachers and researchers when engaging with such complexities. Webb and Jones (2009) evaluated a programme of professional development supporting teachers to introduce formative assessment and were able to identify the changing cultures and practices through the Activity theory.

What is the role of motive in an activity system?

What seemed particularly helpful in using activity systems to illuminate the responses to the learning stores PD, is the central importance of the motive that the subject brings to that activity and towards the object. This same mediating artifacts can be used within a system (e.g., observations, interviews, teacher professional learning sessions) but depending on the subject's motive to use these, and subsequently operate within these, the system may operate very differently than a system with the same tools but different motive. The power of motive to change an environment has been described by Leont'ev. An activity system is any group of people working together within a common context *but where they all have a different role to play* in that setting, and where rules form a context within which that work, or learning takes place. An activity system recognizes the complexity inherent in different rules, divisions of labour and multiple members of that community. In addition, activity systems neither overlap, and are nether static nor fixed. In understanding an activity establishing motivation is key (Worthen, 2008).

What is the object of the activity?

Defining the object of study is complex, as "the object of an activity should not be confused with either things out there in the environment or with goals" (Engeström et al, 2002, p. 214). Leont'ev (1977) stated that "the object of activity is its *motive*" (p. 5), and this means that the *reason* we undertake action and participate in activity systems may differ according to the role we assume within the system, while recognizing that individuals will have their own motive that helps defines our roles and our subsequent actions in it. In addition, the object of the system has been described as a moving target (Engeström, 2001).

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Activity in the narrow sense is a unit of subject-object interaction by the subject's motive. It is a system of processes oriented towards the motive, where the meaning of any individual component of the system is determined by its role in attaining the motive (Kaptelenin & Nardi, 2006, p.60).

Within an activity system 'subject' is defined as the individual or sub-group whose agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis, with actions directed at the 'object'. 'Object' is defined as the problem space at which the activity is directed and which is moulded and transformed into 'outcomes'. 'Tools' are the modes of communication used to transform object to outcome. These are all located with "the physical and institutional context, the social roles and status of the individuals involved, the cultural mediators available" (Daniels, 1998, p. 104) by looking at 'rules', 'community' and 'roles'. 'Tools' in activity systems refers to the means (artifact, instrument) relating subject and object to produce the outcome. This occurs within the wider context of the rules, roles and community (lower part of the triangle) (Engeström, 1993, 2001).

▪ The present study

The three-year evaluation spans three phases: the formative evaluation of the development of learning stories and exemplars and an accompanying Teachers' Guide (now available online http://www.inclusive.org.nz/throughdifferenteyes), a national questionnaire identifying current assessment practices used by teachers for students with high and very high needs, and an evaluation of the provision of a professional development and learning project with a group of teachers, advisers, teacher-aides and parents in schools using the exemplars. The purpose of this paper is to focus specifically on the professional development phase in schools. However, we draw on data from the earlier phases to provide the context.

A 24-item questionnaire sent to all teachers in New Zealand to explore teachers' use of assessment for students with high and very high needs showed that over 24 assessment tools were being used, although the 'learning stories' approach was largely not being used in a school-based setting (Bourke, Mentis & Todd, in press). In this further phase of the evaluation, the Ministry of Education targeted professional development and made this available to a group of teachers in schools in one region. These schools were identified and selected by the PD providers in conjunction with the Ministry of Education because (1) they had high number of students with high and very high needs in the schools and (2) specialist teachers (SEITs) supported the teachers in these schools on an itinerant basis.

At the beginning of the school year, the Professional Development providers held a one-day workshop for the participating schools, including principals, teachers, SEITs and some Ministry of Education-Special Education personnel (e.g., psychologists, special education advisers). The evaluators attended this day, visited some of the participating schools, and undertook structured interviews with teachers, SEITs and teacher-aides.

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Early documentation of learning stories was identified, but the narrative assessment through learning stories was not apparent in the first round of visits, where the dominant discourse for teaching staff was around the 'object of their focus, 'what is a narrative assessment? And the 'roles' they were to play: 'who is going to do this?'.

Initially the PD providers were contracted by the Ministry of Education to involve 46 mainstream schools and 23 SEITs providing support to those schools. This effectively meant one teacher in each school was involved, and establishing learning stories with an identified student with high and very high needs in each school (46 students).

This paper presents an evaluation of teacher professional learning where a number of 'novel' contributing factors were at play. The intention at the beginning of the professional development was that the Ministry of Education was introducing narrative assessment as a strategy for teachers to assess students with high and very high needs in the regular school setting, at both primary and secondary levels. The Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEITs) were to be provided with PD from an external professional development provider, and these SEITs were then to work with teachers to introduce the strategy into schools. It meant therefore that these specialist teachers (SEITs) were working in schools introducing (a) a new mediating artifact, narrative assessment and learning stories, and (b) they were also supporting teachers in a PD environment, a role they were not usually involved in undertaking. In addition to this, although not identified at the time, many teachers did not want to participate as they felt overloaded with work and other initiatives in the school, the SEITs felt compelled to be involved because they believed it was their assigned 'role' as a SEIT to participate in this initiative. In order to 'make it work', many SEITs worked with teacher-aides instead of teachers to introduce the new initiative. Therefore, as evaluators, the system changed with instant effect when the 'roles' of SEITs changed, the roles of teacher-aides changed by the nature of their intense involvement in the project, and during the first phase of its introduction, relatively few teachers participated in the project. The professional development providers, contracted to provide the PD service continued with these complexities and held workshops, seminars, onsite visits, and email contact with the SEITs.

An important factor that had a marked effect on the system, and that will be reported in this paper, is the absence of a Teachers' Guide that had been developed to support the PD process. It was still in draft form, and not released by the Ministry of Education until nine months after the project with participating schools started. Therefore, this meant the SEITs, PD providers and teacher-aides were re-creating templates, learning stories and narrative assessment without exemplars to work from.

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- **Examining the Activity Systems**

The evaluation of the introduction of narrative assessment through professional development in schools captured both the complexities of using a new form of assessment, involving different roles for teachers, SEITs, teacher-aides and parents, as well the involvement of a PD provider 'coming into' each school-based system. As Russell (1997) pointed out, "the very presence of even a single newcomer, no matter how powerless, can change an activity system" (p.11) and "a newcomer may pick up (appropriate) some tool from one activity system, carry it back to a familiar activity system, and put it to use (perhaps a very different use), transforming that activity system in the process" (p. 11).

Contradictions do occur in complex systems, and particularly where a number of roles play out within a system. Engeström (2001) in one study, pointedly brought to the participants' attention the contradictory demands inherent in their work by showing multiple views of a 'reality' via a videotaped patient case in a health care system. In this, he showed a number of specialists and health care practitioners supporting young children submitted to a Children's hospital where there were contradictions between the object of patient health care and the rule of cost-efficiency.

In an education context, principals, teachers, specialist, inservice teacher educators and itinerating support teachers participate actively to support student learning, but also encounter contradictions in *how* they achieve common goals. They do so through their various roles, which at times conflict with rules or expectations within the context they work, creating tensions within and between systems. In identifying some of these contradictions and acting on them, barriers to teacher learning, and to policy implementation can be explored.

Example one: Understanding the rules and roles
An exploration of 'rules' and 'roles', as understood in activity systems, seemed particularly illuminative of what happened in and following the PD. According to Engeström (1993, 2001), rules refers to the tacit and explicit regulations, norms, and conventions that constrain actions and interventions within the activity system. 'Roles' refers to horizontal division of tasks between members of the community, and vertical division of power and status. Analysis using activity systems thus provided an example of the importance of teachers, and indeed PD providers and the Ministry of Education as instigators of the initiative, to understand the 'rules' of an initiative and the context within which it is introduced at an early stage in that initiative. It also showed the importance considering the role changes suggested by the PD and implications of this for teachers. It became apparent that when an initiative implied actions that did not fit into the current role of teachers, tensions arose for the teachers about whether it was seen as a meaningful and credible activity for them and about the identity of the person who would fulfil that function (see Figure 2).
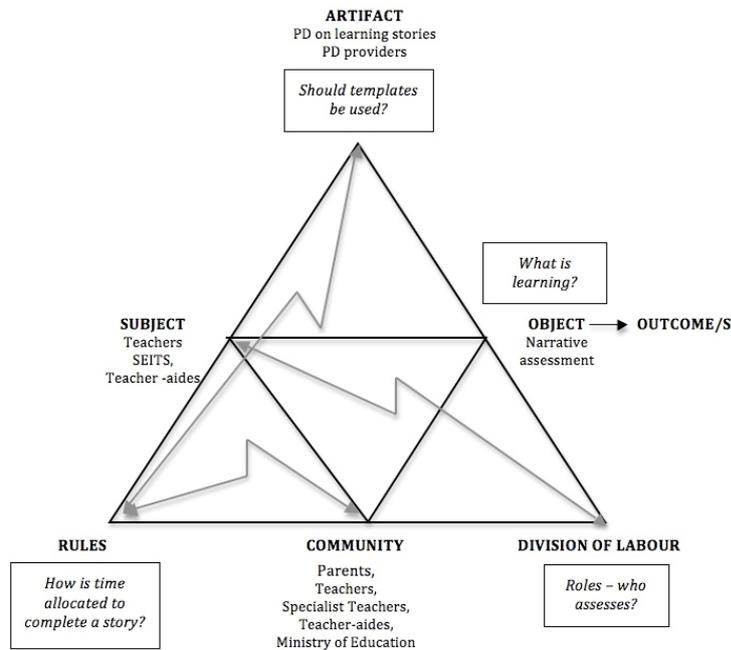
Figure 2: Understanding the rules and the roles

Teachers pulled out of the project early on, some because of time commitments and others because their principal had not provided them with enough information, or no release time to attend the PD day, and therefore SEITs were often left with the charge of finding new teachers to participate. These SEITs were juggling time commitments and responsibility for getting teachers involved. For example, at the beginning of the PD period, SEITs were not sure how they would fit it in:

> *"I'm feeling there's a lot to do, I'm not sure I can fit it in to be honest. I still have to get [a teacher] on board which is hard...I'm trying to find someone else. I'll have to convert them, get them to see the merit in it when they haven't had the PD day like I have" (SEIT, May, 09).*

Alongside this, there were various understandings of rules, especially within this current example, where narrative assessment and learning stories had not previously been used with school-aged students. When there was some confusion, teachers preferred templates, structure and a format, and use this as the basis for becoming increasingly creative and flexible, hence 'bending the rules'. One teacher commenced the process by "reading some articles" and going to the back section of the article to get practical examples. Another teacher reported going online and 'googling' narrative assessment and learning stories prior to the PD day because she felt 'should know' about them but did not.

Later, at a PD day, teachers continued to ask the PD providers to produce 'a template' in the absence of the Teachers' Guide that had yet to be released by the Ministry of Education. This created some tension as, on the one hand, the PD providers felt they were not doing their job if the teachers required a template because they wanted them to understand the process and create their own Learning Stories while, on the other hand, teachers felt they needed some starting point through a recognised exemplar. During the first visit to one of the schools, a teacher stated it would have been helpful to have a template as:

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"I don't know if I did this right", "I want to know if I'm on the right track", and that with a guide "you don't forget anything". (Teacher). As this teacher also indicated, she asked, "Do I have the essential things in this...if someone else reads this, will they see what I am seeing?"

After the PD day, the researchers made two visits to the schools, and by the end of the second visit to SEITs and teacher-aides in their own schools, the researchers observed teachers reworking the templates to fit their local circumstances and moved away from the original structured format.

In terms of the roles, the introduction of Learning Stories created a range of issues. For a start, many teachers actively chose not to participate even though the principal of the school had put their name forward. Much negotiation between the schools and PD facilitators ensued, resulting in the teacher-aides, and the visiting SEITs taking primary responsibility for the initiative. One specialist teacher reported:

"There is a teacher who seems to want me to be a glorified teacher aide. She asks me what I think, but she's not letting me take charge like the other teachers do. I'm hoping the PD will help me with strategies and ideas for that. I hope it will get the schools to understand our roles (SEITs). I'm a qualified teacher but I'm not a special education teacher, I'm not an expert so I hope this will help" (SEIT, April 2009).

The SEITs felt that part of the introduction of learning stories into schools, was a function of their role, and therefore seemed to feel some compulsion to 'make it work'. As a result, they worked with teacher-aides to implement the strategy, with the effect that for some children, their teachers were not directly involved in the process. It therefore negated the purpose of the formative assessment which was to engage in dialogue with teachers about their own pedagogy and practice. Teacher responses to the questionnaires administered prior to the PD suggested an explanation for these actions. These responses suggested that teachers see themselves as the person who does and should lead assessment, and also see themselves as confident in their current forms of assessment (i.e., in assessing students in relation to learning, 'knowing' the student, preparing for the IEP, reporting to parents and accessing resources). In terms of their role and how they saw their role, there did not seem to be any reason to change.

Also, whilst teachers reported that it is mostly they who do and should lead this process, they identified teacher-aides as next most likely to *do* the assessment. There is evidence therefore to suggest teachers might not have motivation to change their assessment practices, even though learning stories seem to be entirely consistent with their espoused views on assessment. Also, there was a suggestion that if teachers could be encouraged to explore the use of learning stories, they might find them very appropriate and useful. We found that teachers who *are* using learning stories provided rich feedback on the value of using this form of assessment for parents, teachers, students and support teams.

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Example two: Understanding the artifact

This professional development and resource development initiative to support teacher assessment for students with high and very high needs, to utilise learning stories as a form of narrative assessment, was introduced by the Ministry of Education. While learning stories have been used in early childhood settings (Carr, 2001, Cullen, Williamson & Lepper, 2005), they have not been used in regular primary or secondary schools. Therefore, for many teachers they were unclear as to what constituted a learning story, narrative assessment or what made 'describing a scene' at school move into a form of assessment. Subsequently, the artifact itself (learning story) created confusion, and it was also unclear ho should be writing the learning story so a subsequent tension between the artifact and the role was also identified (Figure 3).

ARTIFACT
Assessment approaches – eg observations, examples of work, portfolios etc

How can assessment approaches be used differently?

Engaging teachers in using learning stories

SUBJECT
Specialist teachers
Teacher -aides

Teacher-aides become responsible for using learning stories

OBJECT → **OUTCOME/S**
Narrative assessment
[Teachers became the object]

RULES

Whose initiative – Ministry or school?

COMMUNITY
Parents,
Teachers,
Specialist Teachers
Teacher-aides
Ministry of Education

DIVISION OF LABOUR

Roles – who should collect data and write the learning story?

Different and conflicting expectations for contributions in assessment and narrative assessment

Figure 3: Understanding the artifact

The earlier issue of the need for a template and a teachers' guide, seemed key for the teachers in reaching an understanding of the artifact. A template was provided by the PD facilitators, and one of the SEITs later noted "I'm glad somebody asked for a template, we need to know what information to include, so that it's standardised" (SEIT interview, May, 09). However, the point of narrative assessment is that it is *not* standardised, but for these SEITs having some basis of a systematic framework to give to teacher-aides appeared to provide confidence and stability in their practice. Ironically, the PD for these teachers and SEITs was intended to create instability in order to forge new ways of thinking about pedagogy and practice through narrative assessment. This approach is consistent with current views on supporting and challenging teacher practice through professional learning initiatives (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung 2007).

The mediating tool for the teachers and SEITs was viewed as 'new' and 'time consuming'. However, in the earlier survey to all teachers reported that the three main assessment methods for learners with high and very high needs collecting examples of work (910 teachers) and observations (910 teachers); anecdotal records (851 teachers) and portfolios (770 teachers). These were followed by checklists (744 teachers); interviews (727 teachers); and running records or reading (715 teachers). The least used assessment methods were P-levels (57 teachers); ASDAN (92 teachers), and psychometric tests (121 teachers). Therefore, the assessments teachers were already doing (examples of work, observations, anecdotal records, checklists and interviews) largely made up the components of a learning story. In that questionnaire, teachers also reported that they found observations (78.9%), anecdotal records (56.2%) and portfolios (51.7%) the most useful information (Bourke, Mentis, & Todd, in press). The interesting factor for us then is, *why are teachers finding narrative assessment difficult, and choosing to opt out of professional learning support for this strategy, when the mediating artifact involves what they already do and value?*

There was evidence from questionnaire responses of teachers that despite their orientation to a more formative assessment approach through the use of observations, work samples and interviews, learning stories were comparatively unknown and seldom used. There was even a suggestion that teachers did have a knowledge of the underlying philosophy and use of basic techniques of a formative approach as well as a perception that this approach provided more *useful* assessment than standardized norm tests. One possible explanation is in the way the artifact is perceived by teachers. It is seen as a MOE initiative, they did not choose to participate in the PD, and narrative assessment and learning stories are seen as time consuming, with little relevant support through a framework. These issues have largely been resolved through the publication of the Teachers' Guide and the website showcasing exemplars in action. Subsequently, a new group of teachers have opted into the programme through choice.

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- **Summary**

The early evaluation of this initiative shows teachers not opting in, specialist teachers doing what they 'have to', schools not sure of why they are participating, parents not involved, PD providers 'shocked' at low level interest, and in general little evidence that this is supporting student learning. The subject of the PD, intended to be the teacher, became the teacher-aide or more generally the SEIT, and therefore this created a particular view of learning story.

The evaluation of the project highlighted that this was not just about introducing narrative assessment through learning stories, but generated substantial shifts for teacher learning and their role, alongside SEITs and teacher-aides. For SEITs in particular, their role as specialist teacher became increasingly to support PD for teacher-aides and this in turned created new patterns of activity. As Engeström (2001) noted, "expansive learning activity produces culturally new patterns of activity" (p.139).

One of the side-effects, but a striking issue for the teacher-aides, SEITs and those teachers who did participate, was the general *lack of time* they experienced. This was reported in relation to the time taken to be involved in PD, to try new initiatives, to write a learning story and then to seek feedback from the PD provider. For many of these educators, they were attempting to 'add on' to their workload, rather than incorporate it into their practice. The artifact became a 'job' to do, with SEITs and teacher-aides taking a more surface approach to their learning. They (and possibly the PD providers) wanted visible evidence of their learning story, and therefore did not see it as changing their own practice. The template, raised earlier, was seen as an expeditious measure, as noted by a SEIT "the template made me realise I could do a quick version and get on with life. Prior to the day, the exemplars seemed very descriptive, very long and could be seen as a burden" (SEIT, May, 09). A teacher-aide also felt there was not enough time, but for her it was around writing down the child's experiences as they occurred so that there was a record of learning to sit alongside the photographs and other forms of evidence of learning.

In addressing some of the teacher concerns, the document "Narrative Assessment. A Guide for Teachers" (Ministry of Education, 2009) explains and describes what constitutes a Learning Story, providing numerous examples, and hopes to "inspire teachers to write their own rich learning stories about their students" (p. 4). The early evaluation of the experiences of the participating teachers in the PD project, and those who chose not to participate, showed it was the perceived *time, understanding of the intent and format of narrative assessment* and then *connecting the relevance to their own teaching* that created the most tension. The effect of innovations such as these, that have promise to highlight student learning not seen through other assessment practices, can be minimised if the tensions and inherent contradictions within the system in which these are introduced are not fully recognised. Reform becomes impeded and local success minimised, when all aspects of a system are not fully understood.

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