

# Navigating educational excellence

EMPOWERING TEACHERS WITH INSIGHTFUL DATA FOR  
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SLOVENIAN SCHOOLS

LEARNING STORY – SLOVENIA

Authors: Mateja Brejc and Manja Podgoršek Mesarec, Digital Education Unit,  
Ministry of Education, Slovenia

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## Summary

This learning story explores the impact of the OrKa tool in Slovenian primary schools. By equipping school leaders and teachers with detailed insights into students' performance, OrKa fosters a culture of continuous improvement. The story highlights how principals use the tool for strategic decision-making, teachers collaborate to address gaps in knowledge, and students benefit from tailored instruction that emphasises their needs. Through timely data-sharing, collaborative analysis and a focus on systemic alignment, OrKa showcases the potential of data-driven education to elevate teaching, learning, and leadership. Whether a teacher, principal, or policymaker, this story offers lessons for leveraging data to improve the quality of education.

### Quick reference sheet

<b>Country</b>	Slovenia
<b>For whom is the learning story?</b>	School leaders, teachers, policy makers
<b>What is it about?</b>	A data platform that allows schools to visualise national exam data by different variables to inform their decisions to improve school performance
<b>Target group in the learning story</b>	Primary schools in Slovenia
<b>The focus of the learning story</b>	Using national test data platform for school improvement
<b>Keywords</b>	Quality assurance in education, standardised tests, school self-evaluation, formative assessment, data sharing

## Background

### Notes on education system and the quality in schools in Slovenia

The Slovenian school system is structured to ensure universal access to quality education, following the principles of inclusivity, equity, and lifelong learning. It is governed by the Ministry of Education, which establishes policies and frameworks for all levels of education.

The system is structured in the following stages:

- Pre-school Education for children up to 6 years, focusing on holistic development and early learning.
- Primary Education which is a compulsory 9-year program starting at age 6, divided into three triads (grades 1–3, 4–6, and 7–9). This stage emphasises foundational knowledge and skills, preparing students for further education.

- Secondary Education divided into general (gymnasium), vocational, and technical programs, prepares students for higher education or entry into the workforce.
- Tertiary Education includes undergraduate, postgraduate, and vocational programs delivered by universities, faculties, and independent higher education institutions.
- Adult Education and Lifelong Learning provides opportunities for continued education, reskilling, and personal development.

Education in Slovenia is free at the primary and secondary levels, with a strong focus on inclusion and quality. Schools are encouraged to adopt innovative teaching methods and continuously improve their practices through self-evaluation and external evaluations.

As stated by the [Ministry of Education](#), processes and results of quality assessment and assurance in education, as well as mechanisms for ensuring quality, are crucial for the development of Slovenia's educational work. Quality assurance in education and training is a topic of political debate on national, European, and global levels. Globally, with the adoption of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, and at the European level through the Strategic Framework for Education and Training, member states have reaffirmed their consensus on the need for policies and systems aimed at ensuring and strengthening quality in education.

Quality education is also a key strategic direction and a sustainable goal in the **Slovenian Development Strategy 2030**. In addition to the *White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia* (2011), the Ministry of Education has prepared a new developmental working document, the [National Framework for Quality Assessment and Assurance in Education](#) (2017), with the aim of improving and maintaining the quality of education. Through this national framework, the Ministry guides further developmental processes to establish a concept for quality assessment and assurance at both the organisational and system levels of education.

The system for assessing and ensuring quality in education in Slovenia is significantly based on internal quality assessment, i.e., the self-evaluation of educational organisations. Parallel to the existing self-evaluation, the system also maintains various well-established forms of external evaluation:

- [The Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education](#),
- [National assessments in Grades 3, 6 and 9](#), the general matura and vocational matura exams,
- International comparative assessments of student achievement in specific learning areas through international research,
- National evaluation studies,
- Processes for modernizing educational work.

Systemic processes for quality assessment and assurance in education are carried out by self-evaluation of educational organisations (internal evaluation) and external evaluation of the education system and organisations. The Council for Quality and Evaluations, a body operating

within the Ministry of Education and The Advisory Working Group for International Research and Studies in pre-university education, operating under the Ministry of Education and led by the state secretary also contribute to quality assurance and evaluation processes.

This framework ensures a comprehensive and collaborative approach to fostering quality in education at both institutional and systemic levels.

### OrKa – A digital tool for enhancing educational practices in primary schools

**OrKa is a digital tool for primary schools to identify and ensure the quality of teaching and learning in their school.** It allows teachers and school principals to obtain content-relevant data from the national assessment (*slv. NPZ*) results, as additional information about students' knowledge, as well as from the end-of-year school grades, which they can effectively use in analyses and improving school practices. The program plays a broader role in Slovenia's quality assurance framework. By simplifying data processing and offering objective and precise data, it increases the use of national assessment results and supports schools in planning educational improvements. OrKa is aligned with [national quality standards and indicators](#), providing reliable data for self-evaluation processes.

[National examinations Centre](#) previously developed a similar tool for secondary schools in 2007, which was updated in 2014. The need for a tool to facilitate detailed data analysis in primary schools became evident, enabling better use of student knowledge results both within individual schools and across Slovenia. The software (Orka tool) builds on National Examinations Centre's established guidelines for national assessment result analysis, enhancing usability and detail. Its features were influenced by schools' experiences, revealing key needs and priorities for such a tool. As stated in [the Manual](#): »Testing has shown that OrKa functions reliably, though occasional bugs may occur. Users are encouraged to report any issues or suggestions for improvement to ensure the tool remains as effective and user-friendly as possible. Ultimately, OrKa aims to support principals and teachers in enhancing educational practices and improving student outcomes across Slovenian schools« (p. 1).

Schools interested in using OrKa can typically obtain further guidance or technical support from the **National Examinations Centre** or through documentation and resources provided by the Ministry of Education in Slovenia.

OrKa tool provides a secure and confidential environment for accessing data and, most importantly, offers users an easy overview of students' performance in the national assessments at school and nationally. It allows a variety of comparisons: between students in the school and their peers in Slovenia, between classes or learning groups within the school, by year, etc. The teacher can prepare task-by-task<sup>1</sup> analyses for his/her students; view the individual task with the solution and the digitised answers of the students. This helps to identify areas of strengths and weakness in

<sup>1</sup> The term 'task' in this context refers to each individual question students solve in the national assessment.

students' knowledge. The software also provides a value-added analysis that measures the progress of students' knowledge from grades 6 to 9.

In terms of data privacy teachers and the principal of each primary school have access only to the results of their own school and students, and they cannot view the results of students from other schools. In general, access to the tool can be granted to all teachers at the school, with the school administrator being the one who assigns access. The student's answers from the national assessment are the ones entered into the tool. Students solve the tasks on paper, the tasks are scanned and converted into electronic form, in which the evaluation of the correctness of the tasks also takes place. National assessments are conducted for students in the 6th and 9th grades, and for the first time this (2024/25) school year, assessments has also been carried out for 3rd-grade students. The assessments cover the following subjects:

- In the 3rd grade: mother tongue, mathematics
- In the 6th grade: mother tongue, foreign language, mathematics

In the 9th grade: mother tongue, mathematics; the third subject is determined by the minister, who, in September, selects up to four subjects from the compulsory subjects of the 8th and 9th grades and specifies which third subject will be assessed at each school.

The National Assessment (NPZ) is legally defined by the Primary School Act and the Rules on National Assessment in Primary Schools. Information can also be found in several other documents and publications, such as for instance Information for Students and Parents, Foundations of the National Assessment (NPZ) in Primary Schools, Instructions for Conducting the NPZ in Primary Schools 2024/25, Terminology Glossary for the NPZ, Access to Evaluated Knowledge Assessments and Information on NPZ Results for 6th and 9th Grade Students and Their Parents, Data Protection: Notice to Students Taking the National Assessment and Their Parents Regarding the Processing of Personal Data, etc. (See more at <https://www.ric.si/nacionalno-preverjanje-znanja/splosne-informacije/>).

Annually the National report on National assessment is prepared and presented from 2001/2002 on. The report emphasises the structured approach and comprehensive insights offered by the Orka tool. This system enables schools and teachers to access detailed, data-driven analyses of student performance across key subjects. The report structure provides: comparative statistics at the school, regional, and national levels, breakdown of results by subject, year, and student demographics, including those with special needs as well as specification tables and guidelines for interpreting results to inform teaching strategies. Orka delivers actionable feedback for individual students and aggregated data to support schools in identifying trends and opportunities for improvement. By utilizing these insights, teachers can refine their methods, target specific learning challenges, and foster a culture of continuous educational enhancement. (See the report at <https://www.ric.si/nacionalno-preverjanje-znanja/porocila--analize--raziskave/>)

**Explanatory video** (in Slovenian language):

[ericdoc.ric.si/razno/OrKa/RicOrKa\\_MMS\\_CA\\_290124.mp4](https://ericdoc.ric.si/razno/OrKa/RicOrKa_MMS_CA_290124.mp4)

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### The scope of the learning story

We have conducted three individual interviews with: 1) a representative of the National Examinations Center, who provided insight into the conceptual framework and implementation of OrKa tool, as well as its impact on educational practices; 2) the school principal of a primary school, who shared his perspective on the use of OrKa tool at the school level; and 3) a math teacher from the same primary school, who offered an operational-level view of lesson delivery based on the data they gather annually regarding their students' achievements.

In the interviews, we asked them about the implementation of OrKa and its effects on educational process in general.

In the following sections, we gather the most relevant information from each interview, combining the systemic view of the NEC representative by the views and practical examples from the school principal and math teacher. We have opted for this approach to present a broader view and primarily emphasise the specific experiences at school level when using the tool and how it has affected their leadership and teaching in their contexts.

## How can OrKa empower a math teacher and school principal to improve teaching and learning in primary school

### The benefits of using OrKa for teachers

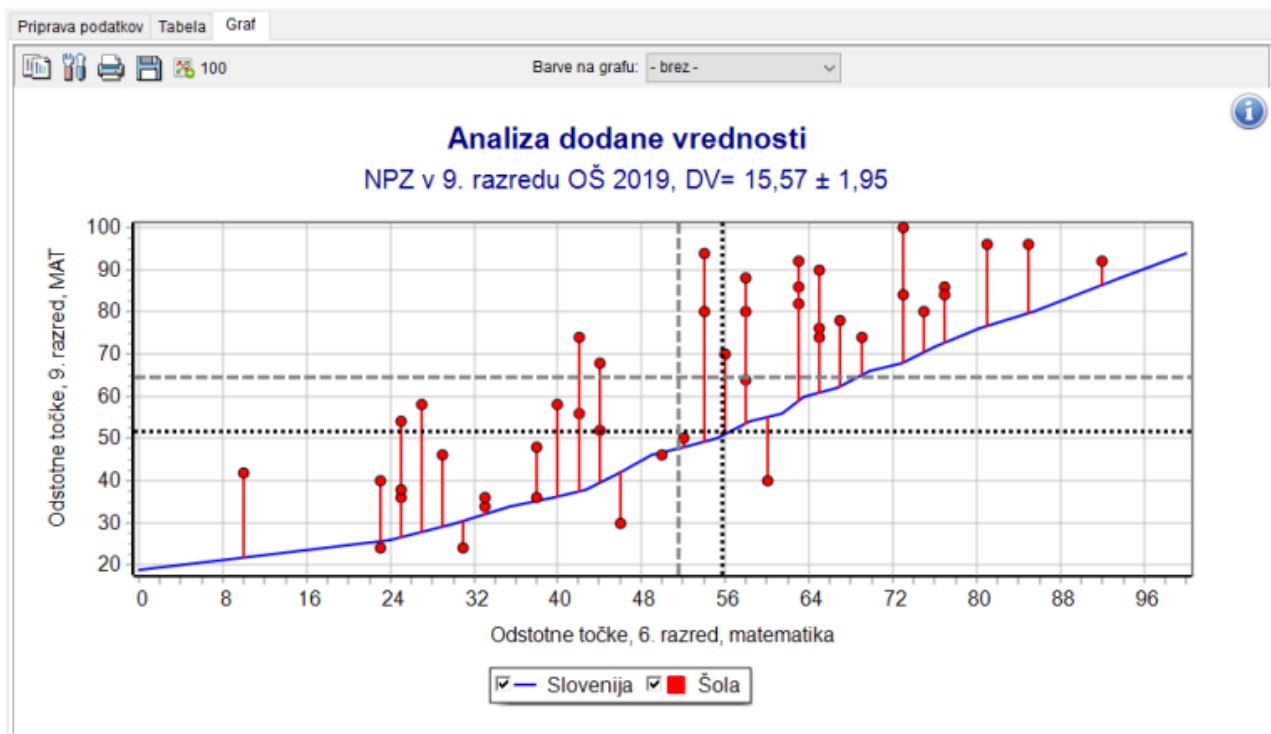
As discussed with the representative of NEC there are several intended benefits of using OrKa tool on teacher level. As he states, for example for a **primary school mathematics teacher**, OrKa provides robust analytical tools that can **measure, evaluate, and compare student performance** on national examination in mathematics.

OrKa equips mathematics teachers with **precise analytical tools** to improve instructional quality, monitor progress, and ultimately enhance student success in mathematics. In terms of added value (see example in Figure 1), there are several pinpoints:

- Teachers can evaluate **individual and group performance** at a granular level, examining scores by **each individual question** and identifying areas where students struggle or excel.
- The tool compares the school's results with national averages, offering insights into the relative performance.
- Teachers can create **customised student groups** (e.g., by class or gender) and analyze their progress or challenges.
- By pinpointing **weak points** in knowledge (e.g., algebra, geometry), teachers can **adjust their instruction** to address these gaps more effectively.
- Graphical representations and tables simplify the interpretation of results, supporting quicker decision-making.
- Teachers can use insights to create **targeted interventions** and **improvement plans**.

Figure 1 illustrates the possibility of value-added analysis, which shows the progress in knowledge reflected in students' achievements on the national assessment in 9<sup>th</sup> grade (y-axis), relative to their national assessment achievements in 6<sup>th</sup> grade (x-axis). By using value-added analysis, we can determine how students at a particular school have advanced in their knowledge compared to their peers with comparable prior national assessment achievements across Slovenia.

On the graph, the blue line represents the (predicted) achievements for Slovenia, while the red dots show the achievements of selected students at the school. The black dashed lines indicate the average achievements for the school and the dotted lines for Slovenia).



**Figure 1** Presentation of the analysis of added value in 6th in 9th grade compared to national trend.

A primary school mathematics teacher in Slovenia shared her approach to integrating digital tools, formative monitoring, and collaborative practices to improve teaching and student outcomes.

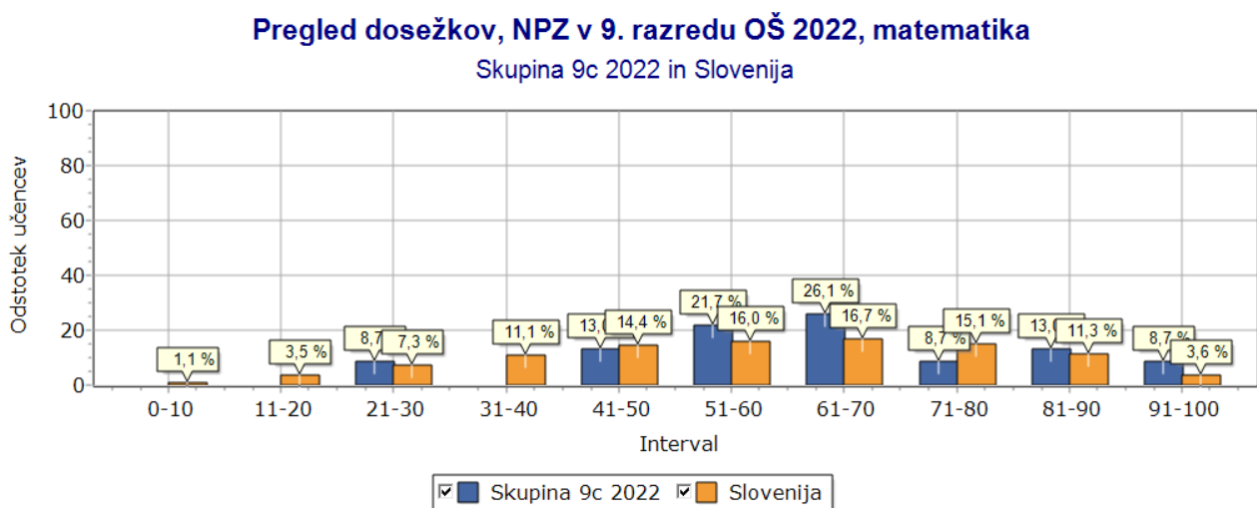
The teacher regularly uses **electronic materials**, such as iTextbooks, as she finds them highly effective in enhancing her lessons. She supplements these resources with exercises and assignments sourced from the Internet, which allow her to adopt a variety of teaching approaches. Collaboration among mathematics teachers in her school is a key aspect of her practice. They share findings, materials, and methods to collectively refine their teaching strategies. While she does not heavily rely on digital tools to support her lessons, she incorporates them thoughtfully when they add meaningful value. The school utilises an online classroom platform (e.g., Moodle) where she uploads teaching materials and resources. Additionally, Microsoft Teams is used for communication and updates with individual students.

To track her students' knowledge and achievements, the teacher adopts a combination of traditional and digital methods. She manually enters formative monitoring data into a printed table, as she finds this *"the simplest way to keep an overview of pupils' progress"*. Alongside this, she uses learning analytics in Moodle to monitor student activities and provides feedback on interactive tasks.

A key part of her process is analyzing data from national assessments (NPZ). The teacher has undergone training in using OrKa, which allows her to conduct detailed and precise analyses of student performance. This data is, as she says, instrumental in planning her teaching for the following school year, particularly by addressing areas where students performed below the national average.

At the school level, as the teacher emphasises, the focus extends beyond individual analysis to collaborative reflection. Teachers specifically analyze the performance of the top and bottom 10% of students and identify reasons for underachievement in subject groups, such as the mathematics teachers' group (see example in Figure 2). The emphasis is placed on factors within the teachers' control, ensuring actionable changes in teaching practices.

The graph on the Figure 2 shows that "Skupina 9c 2022" achieved above-average results in the 2022 national assessment in mathematics compared to the Slovenian average. A larger percentage of their students are located in the middle and higher achievement intervals (primarily 51-60%, 61-70%, 71-80%, 81-90%, and 91-100%), while a smaller percentage of students are in the lower achievement intervals (with the exception of 21-30%). This suggests that, on average, this group performed more successfully than the Slovenian average in mathematics on the national assessment.



*Figure 2 Example of data presentation in school report regarding distribution of students' achievements ("Skupina 9c 2022") in relation to national average ("Slovenija").*

Students indirectly benefit from these analyses, as according to teachers, the instruction in the following year addresses areas of underachievement, such as specific mathematical concepts and skills. Teachers also compare students' grades with their national assessment results to identify gaps and align teaching strategies accordingly.

The teacher highlighted the significant role of the **OrKa tool** in her teaching practices as following:

- She finds the **OrKa bank of tasks and assignments** particularly useful. This resource includes all previous assignments from national assessments, which can be sorted by

objective, content, and difficulty level. The tool enables her to quickly locate relevant tasks and create customised assignments and then can ask students to do these custom tests and see how they perform.

- By leveraging the Grade 6 NPZ data, she gains a clearer understanding of student progress and uses it for both formative monitoring and planning activities in Grade 7 and beyond. She values this data more for future planning than the Grade 9 NPZ data, as the latter will increasingly serve as a ranking tool for secondary school admissions.
- The teacher envisions further improvement in OrKa by integrating data from other platforms (e.g., eAssistant) to consolidate various aspects of student activities and achievements into a single, comprehensive resource.

The teacher emphasises that the effectiveness of data analysis and its use in improving teaching varies among individuals. However, she believes that the more informed the analysis and lesson planning, the more likely teachers will implement these strategies. The motivation among teachers to adopt data-driven practices grows when they see the tangible benefits for student outcomes.

### The benefits of using OrKa for school principal

According to the interview with NEC representative for school principals, the **OrKa tool** in general also offers a range of features that support **school leadership** and **school improvement in particular**.

- **OrKa** provides principals with access to comprehensive data on student performance across different subjects at both the **school level** and **national level**.
- By examining **statistical analyses** of national assessment results, principals can make informed decisions about school policies and instructional practices.
- The tool enables principals to quickly identify areas where their students are performing well and where improvements are needed. This is especially important for determining areas requiring additional teaching support or intervention.
- By using features like **Porazdelitev dosežkov** (ang. achievement distribution) and **Analiza dodane vrednosti** (ang. value-added analysis), principals can evaluate the **impact of school practices** over time (see Figure 3) and tailor interventions accordingly.

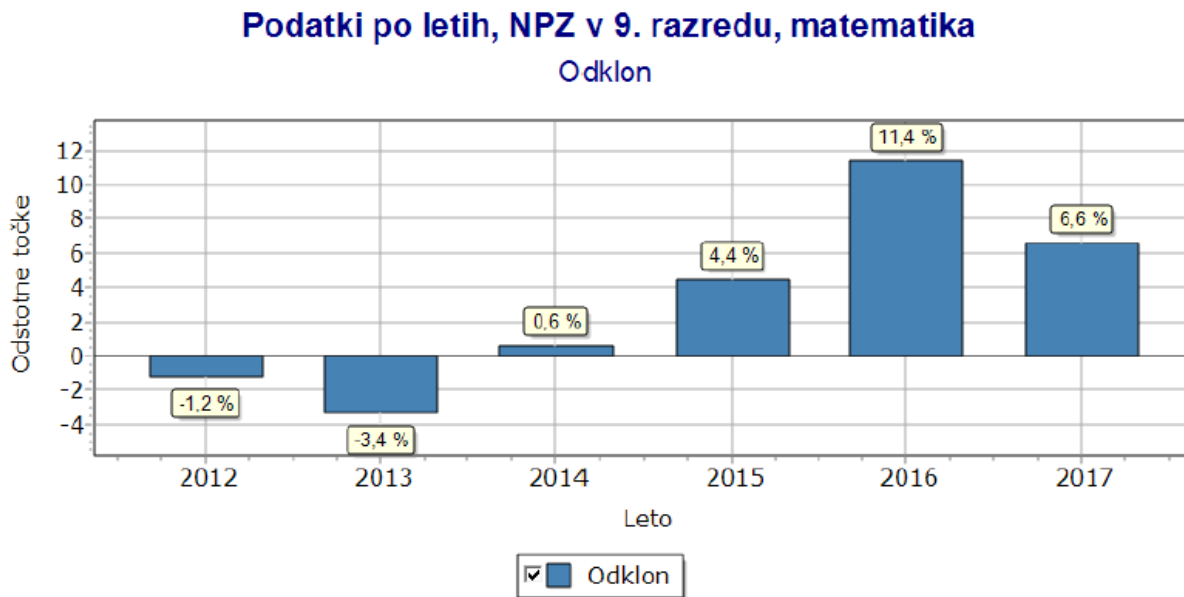


Figure 3 School's national assessment achievement data over the years with displayed deviation

- The program helps principals assess whether **school-wide teaching practices** are effective and if they align with the national educational standards. This supports the creation of **school improvement/strategic plans** based on data-driven insights, implementing strategies to address specific subject-area weaknesses across grade levels and it also aids in identifying the impact of specific teaching practices or **teacher professional development programs**.
- By using **detailed reports** on student performance at both individual and group levels, principals can create targeted **action plans** to address weak areas, professional development for teachers to help them improve instructional methods and student support initiatives for those who need extra help.
- **OrKa** enables principals to share performance data with teachers, encouraging collaboration on improving **teaching practices**. By having detailed reports, teachers can **discuss results**, share strategies, and align efforts to boost student learning outcomes. This helps create a **culture of continuous improvement** within the school.
- **OrKa** helps the principal ensure that the school is aligned with national standards for **education quality**. It offers tools that facilitate school self-assessments and support compliance with **quality assurance frameworks**.

The principal in the interview firstly highlighted the critical role of digitisation in improving data-driven decision-making within schools. He emphasises the importance of collecting and utilizing diverse data types, ranging from **organisational data** (e.g., elective subject choices) to **contextual**

**data** (e.g., insights from project participation). This comprehensive approach aids in fostering school-wide progress and development.

With extensive experience as a long-term principal, he is highly familiar with the **OrKa tool** and its capabilities. He has actively promoted its use, including presenting it to all Slovenian school principals as a valuable tool for analyzing student achievement, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The principal views OrKa as essential for 1) providing detailed analyses of achievement at national, school, and subject levels and 2) Offering an understanding of averages, ranges, and taxonomic levels of tasks, which helps in identifying areas for improvement and strengths.

The principal takes a proactive role in using and sharing OrKa-generated insights. He presents the analyses to the parents, helping them understand school performance and national benchmarks. These insights are also shared with representatives of the School Board to inform strategic planning and policy decisions.

According to the principal, teachers actively engage with OrKa's **assignment bank**, which provides a repository of national examination tasks. This feature, as he points out, allows teachers to access tasks categorised by objective, content, and difficulty level as well as enhance their teaching practices by using task-specific insights to address areas of improvement.

The principal underscores the motivational impact of OrKa on both students and teachers. By analysing and explaining student performance data, the national assessment becomes more meaningful, encouraging students to engage positively. Clear insights at the school level encourage teachers to view data as a tool for improvement, leading to a greater willingness to use OrKa for planning and reflection.

The school has developed a **clear framework** for data analysis. Teachers receive standardised instructions on how to prepare and present their analyses. Collaboration occurs both **horizontally** (within subject groups) and **vertically** (across grade levels) since national examinations are part of a continuum developed throughout primary education. The instructions for using OrKa tool with instructions are available [online](#).

The school's **coordinator** plays a key role in training teachers for examination review and assisting with the integration of OrKa insights into their practice. This collaborative approach ensures that teachers not only analyze results but also reflect on their teaching methods to drive improvement.

The principal emphasises the need to leverage all available data, including findings from **international studies** such as PISA, to guide school development. For instance, the school plans to use the latest PISA results to implement strategies for improving literacy in reading, science, and mathematics. At the same time, he highlights the importance of **timing** in data collection and reporting. If national and international assessment results are shared before the end of summer, schools can incorporate them into planning for the upcoming school year. Delays in reporting (e.g., results shared in autumn) on the other hand hinder timely analysis and planning, reducing the effectiveness of the data.

The principal stresses that the principal's active support for data-driven initiatives directly influences their adoption and development within the school. A strong focus on data use at the leadership level inspires teachers to align their practices with these insights, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

## Lessons learned

### Lesson 1: Empowering schools through data-driven practices

The implementation of the OrKa tool has demonstrated how data-driven approaches can enhance school performance and planning. By providing analytical tools, OrKa supports both leadership and teachers in identifying areas of improvement and measuring progress. Its ability to generate detailed analyses of student achievement at school, subject, and national levels makes it an indispensable resource for fostering educational excellence.

### Lesson 2: Leadership as a catalyst for change

The role of school leadership is important in the successful adoption and utilisation of OrKa. Principals who actively engage with the tool and encourage its use among staff foster a culture of continuous improvement. The proactive use of OrKa to communicate insights with stakeholders, such as parents and school boards, also builds trust and supports data-informed decision-making at all levels.

### Lesson 3: Teacher collaboration and professional development

OrKa promotes collaboration among teachers by providing a clear framework for data analysis and facilitating shared understanding of student needs. Training provided by digital coordinators and the use of the assignment bank help teachers enhance their instructional strategies. This collaborative approach ensures that teachers not only analyse results but also reflect on their teaching practices to address gaps effectively.

### Lesson 4: Student engagement through meaningful insights

Students benefit indirectly from the analyses enabled by OrKa, as instruction is tailored to address specific areas of underachievement. By making examination results more meaningful, the tool motivates students to engage with their learning processes, contributing to improved outcomes.

### Lesson 5: Timing and strategic use of data

The timely availability of data is critical for effective planning. Sharing national and international assessment results before the end of summer allows schools to integrate findings into their plans for the upcoming school year. Delays in data sharing reduce the potential impact of such insights, underscoring the importance of efficient reporting processes.

### Lesson 6: Bridging practice and policy

The use of OrKa highlights the potential for bridging school-level practices with system-level policies. Insights gained from practical application can inform broader educational strategies, ensuring alignment with national educational goals and fostering systemic improvement.

There is potential to enhance OrKa further by integrating it with other digital platforms, to provide a comprehensive overview of student activities and achievements. This integration would streamline data management and make the tool even more effective for school improvement.



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