

Hawke's Bay Primary and Intermediate Schools' Incidence of Severe Behaviour

2007 survey findings

Summary of Report prepared for Hawke's Bay Primary Principals Association

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The Hawke's Bay Principals' Association asked NZCER to survey teachers in the Hawke's Bay primary and intermediate schools, to find out how many students there are with severe behaviour difficulties in Hawke's Bay primary and intermediate schools, the impact that these students have, and the support that is available for teachers working with them. The survey took place in September 2007, and was sent to 79 schools. The response from 525 teachers is representative of these schools, and provides the basis for a reasonable indication of the extent of severe behaviour difficulties encountered by Hawke's Bay primary and intermediate teachers.

Main findings

- One in five of the 12,787 Hawke's Bay primary and intermediate students covered by the survey were reported by their teachers to behave in ways that led to at least one of these outcomes:
 - made the student a danger to others,
 - frequently stopped the student from learning,
 - interrupted the class frequently,
 - stopped other students from accepting the student, or
 - resulted in property damage (or could if they were not stopped).

- Rates of such behaviour were higher in socioeconomic decile 1–2 schools (35 percent), among boys (31 percent), and Year 7–8 students (28 percent).
- Eighty-four percent of the 525 teachers taking part in the survey taught at least one student whose behaviour had one or more negative outcomes in their class. The average number of these students was 5.5 students per class, with a range from none to 29.
- Almost two-thirds of the teachers had one or more students in their class who kept disturbing or annoying other students in the class.
- Just under a third of the teachers had at least one student who physically attacked other students.
- Six percent of teachers reported ongoing physical attacks on themselves or a teacher aide.
- Classmates' learning was disrupted by such behaviour. Some students' own behaviour worsened in around half the classes, and others showed more anxiety or lack of confidence in around 40 percent of the classes.
- Severe student behaviour that disrupted learning had a negative impact on the general health and confidence of around a fifth of the teachers.
- It also made a third of the teachers anxious or wary. They worried about what other people thought about the behaviour of students in the class, and limited the activities they would try with their class.
- The kind of severe behaviour shown by students can have more impact than the total number of students with severe behaviour in a class. Students whose severe behaviour includes verbal abuse, inappropriate language, rushing around the room, refusing to follow instruction, and physical attacks on classmates, teachers, teacher aides or material objects have more negative impacts on teachers and classes.
- Almost all teachers got ongoing advice from their school colleagues and management, back-up from management, and worked with their colleagues to improve student behaviour. Much of this advice, back-up and work was rated as good or very good.
- In-school support from management, other teachers, and consistent whole-school practices had a positive effect on how quickly teachers could settle their classes after an incident of severe behaviour, and the impact for teachers.
- Thirty-nine percent of the teachers were currently working with a Resource Teacher for Learning & Behaviour (RTLB). Twenty-one percent thought this support was good or very good, and 18 percent thought it was satisfactory only, or poor.
- Fourteen percent of the teachers were currently working with Group Special Education on ways to improve student behaviour. Five percent thought this support was good or very good; nine percent thought it satisfactory only, or poor.

- About a third of the teachers received support from a teacher aide, with an average of around 9 hours a week. Nine percent had regular support from school management for an average of 2½ hours a week.