

## **Media release: Secondary schools need more support for student wellbeing**

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Secondary schools feel under pressure to meet the increasingly complex needs of students, including mental health issues.

The finding comes from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) National Survey of Secondary Schools 2018 (the National Survey). The National Survey began in secondary schools in 2003 and is repeated every three years.

Since 2015, the proportion of principals who say their school cannot access external expertise to work with students with mental health needs increased sharply, from 36% to 62%.

'Principals' judgement that school-based supports for student wellbeing and behaviour are more useful than external agencies may reflect the difficulty in accessing that expertise,' Senior Researcher Dr Linda Bonne said.

School-based supports may include in-school counsellors, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb), and health professionals based at schools.

The need for more support for students' overall wellbeing was greater in decile 1–2 schools. 'In decile 1-2 schools, fewer teachers were receiving training to recognise mental health warning signs in students, and fewer teachers were able to refer students to receive timely support,' Dr Bonne said.

Schools reported increased efforts to support student wellbeing since 2015. These included more schools using screening data to identify student needs and concerns, and having support groups for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) youth.

'The findings also show that deliberate strategies to promote students' wellbeing are well embedded at some schools, but that other schools are still embedding such approaches,' Dr Bonne said.

The NZCER survey invited responses from all 314 state and state-integrated secondary schools. Principals, teachers, trustees, and parents and whānau were surveyed separately. The survey was conducted in August-September 2018.

The report, *Secondary schools in 2018: Findings from the NZCER national survey*, is available on the NZCER [website](#).

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