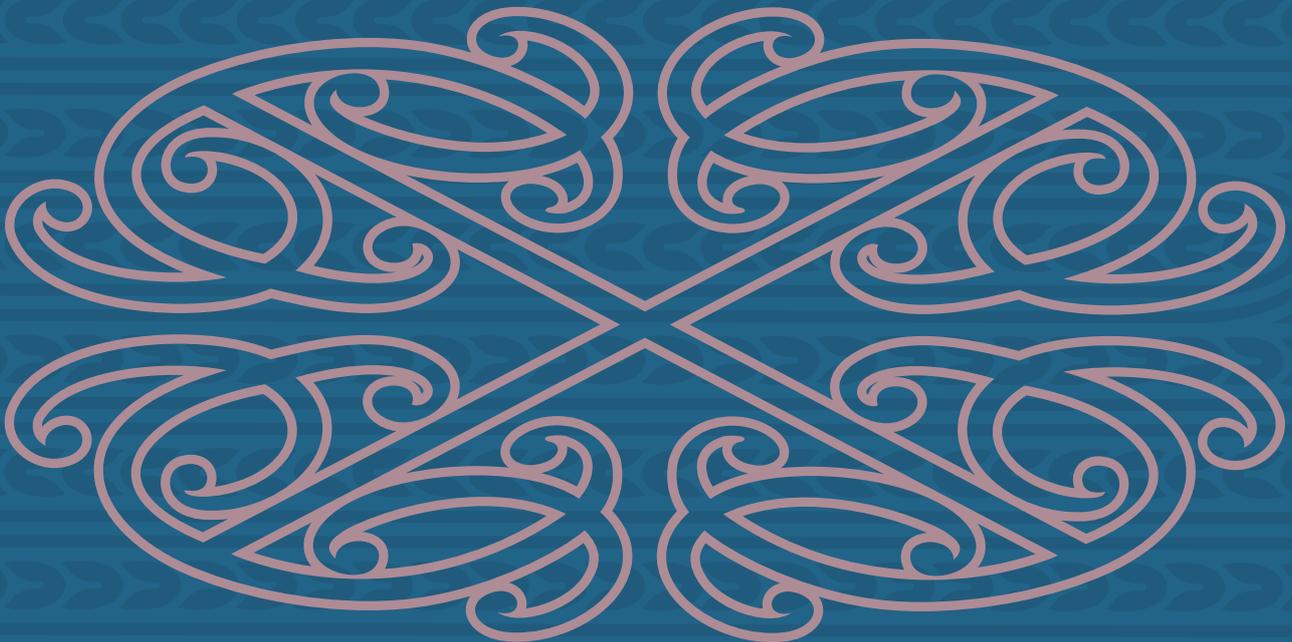# Secondary teachers' perspectives from NZCER's 2021 National Survey of Secondary Schools

Mohamed Alansari, Cathy Wylie, Rose Hipkins,
Sinead Overbye, Renee Tuifagalele,
and Sophie Watson

NZCER
Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa

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1. Introduction

NZCER has run a national survey of secondary schools every 3 years since 2003. For the 2021 National Survey of Secondary Schools, our plan was to survey:

- a sample of 5,376 teachers, randomly chosen from a stratified sample of Years 9–13 and Years 7–13 secondary schools to ensure national representation of schools across all deciles. PPTA used its member database to randomly make the selection and send teachers an email invitation with a link to the online survey. This method allowed the survey to reach individual teachers while preserving their privacy
- all secondary school principals
- parents and whānau, where principals chose to send a link to the survey to their parent and whānau community. We planned to offer schools that did so a report of their parent responses if these were 10% or more of their student roll from a selected number of secondary schools.

The 2021 surveys were made available online not long before the country went into lockdown on 17 August, limiting our responses from principals, and curtailing schools' sharing the survey with their parents and whānau. The effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic for schools and families have led us to postpone our surveys of principals, parents, and whānau to later in Term 4, 2022.

We were fortunate that teachers had the link first, and 453 had responded by 5 September. After consultation with PPTA and SPANZ, we shared the survey link with a new sample of teachers in Term 4 and completed a second wave of data collection with an additional 640 responses. An examination of both sets of data showed that they were very similar, allowing us to combine the data from the two waves for this report, based on responses from 1,093 teachers. The response rate was 21%.

The responses give a nationally representative picture in terms of school decile and are broadly representative by school area and region. Full information about participating teachers' demographics and school characteristics (curriculum learning areas and year levels they taught, years of teaching experience, gender, ethnicity, school decile, area, and region) are shown in the Appendix.

This report covers all the questions asked of teachers, reported in six sections:

- NCEA changes and integration of mātauranga Māori
- Teaching and learning
- Student wellbeing
- Supporting Māori teachers
- Supporting Pacific learners
- Teachers' work, the new Professional Growth Cycle, and PLD.

For all closed survey questions, hypothesis testing was undertaken to examine if there were statistically significant associations between teacher views and experiences, and major school and teacher characteristics (school decile, size of largest class, Māori and non-Māori, subject area, and years of teaching experience).[1,2]

Only a small number of associations were found to be statistically significant, mostly with school decile. These are reported in the main body of the report.

Where the same items were asked in the 2018 national survey, we report any marked changes in teachers' responses.

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1 Chi-square tests for independence were used throughout the report. Because of the large number of significance tests undertaken, False Discover Rate was applied to account for the inflated Type 1 error rate and to ensure we only report on results that are both statistically significant and meaningful.
2 Due to the small sample size of other ethnic groupings, we only cross-tabulated the data for Māori teachers in this report. We were unable to provide separate reporting for Pacific or Asian teachers.

2. NCEA changes and integration of mātauranga Māori

This section documents teachers' responses to a set of items about the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)—the national qualifications for Years 11–13—and their related comments, followed by their responses to a question about integrating mātauranga Māori into their teaching, and their comments about that.

NCEA changes

NCEA is part-way through an ambitious change process[3] in response to a large public consultation exercise that took place in 2018. The consultation process resulted in a set of recommendations to guide the work of Subject Expert Groups (SEGs) as they reviewed the suite(s) of standards available to assess subjects offered in their area. The acronym for this process is RAS (Review of Achievement Standards).

Seven key changes were recommended for RAS:
1. Make NCEA more accessible.
2. Equal status for mātauranga Māori in NCEA.
3. Strengthen literacy and numeracy requirements and assessments.
4. Fewer larger standards.
5. Simplify NCEA's structure.
6. Clearer pathways to further education or work.
7. Keep NCEA Level 1 optional.[4]

The survey items were written with these key changes in mind. The work of the SEGs was staggered but at the time of the survey many teachers had already been able to review draft Level 1 achievement standards for their subjects and some had been part of the process for piloting the changes in their school. At this pivotal moment of change, we looked for indications that teachers do or do not support the intention of the changes, and their perceptions of what the changes are intended to achieve.

Nine percent of the teachers responding were members of a SEG and 23% worked in a school that was part of the pilot of the new Level 1 standards. Fourteen percent of the teachers had volunteered to take part in the pilot and 9% had been asked to do so by their school.[5]

Sixty-one percent said they knew where they could get support and advice for making changes to their Level 1 NCEA courses; fewer (33%) said they had sufficient support and advice to be confident about the NCEA pilot work.

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3   The Ministry of Education describes the change as "the most significant reform of NCEA since the qualification was introduced in 2002". https://ncea.education.govt.nz/what-ncea-change-programme
4   Brief explanations of the scope intended for each change can be found on the NCEA website: https://ncea.education.govt.nz/what-ncea-change-programme
5   Numbers here do not add to 22 because of rounding.

Figure 1 displays teachers' responses to the item bank of NCEA statements. The consolidation of assessments into fewer bigger standards has been supported by the development of new matrices that clearly identify "big ideas" in the subject at *New Zealand Curriculum* (*NZC*) Level 6. This is a step beyond the traditional *NZC* Level 6 content and is intended to align the RAS with the refresh of *NZC* that is currently underway.

Just over half the teachers (55%) agreed or strongly agreed that they understand the curriculum thinking that underpins the new NCEA Level 1 framework for their subject, with 26% giving a neutral response, and 19% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Just 55% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that having fewer standards would create a better balance between learning and assessment. Some of this concern can no doubt be attributed to the worry that more is at stake when student assessment is divided into bigger chunks that carry more credits—49% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this change increases the risk that some students will not gain the number of credits needed for an NCEA Level 1 award in their subject.

Changes to the way literacy and numeracy are assessed, through discrete mandatory literacy and numeracy requirements, were supported by 61% of the teachers.

There is another indication of concern in that many teachers do not support the intent to develop Level 1 as an optional level for most students (see no. 7 in the change recommendations listed above). Forty-four percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that Level 1 should mainly be used for students who will not proceed to Level 2, and 27% gave a neutral response which suggests they are as yet unsure. The response to this item may be related to the "pathways" concern that Level 1 is needed to prepare students for Levels 2 and 3 in the subject: 56% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

In this early stage of these NCEA changes, most teachers are either neutral or disagree that, overall, they will support increased achievement for Māori students, Pacific students, or those with disabilities or who need additional learning support.

Just over half the teachers (57%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that their workloads would reduce once fewer bigger achievement standards were in place, and a further quarter were neutral.

Overall, at this stage of the NCEA changes, 34% were positive about them, 41% neutral, and 25% had negative views.

FIGURE 1 **Teachers' views of NCEA changes (*n* = 978)**
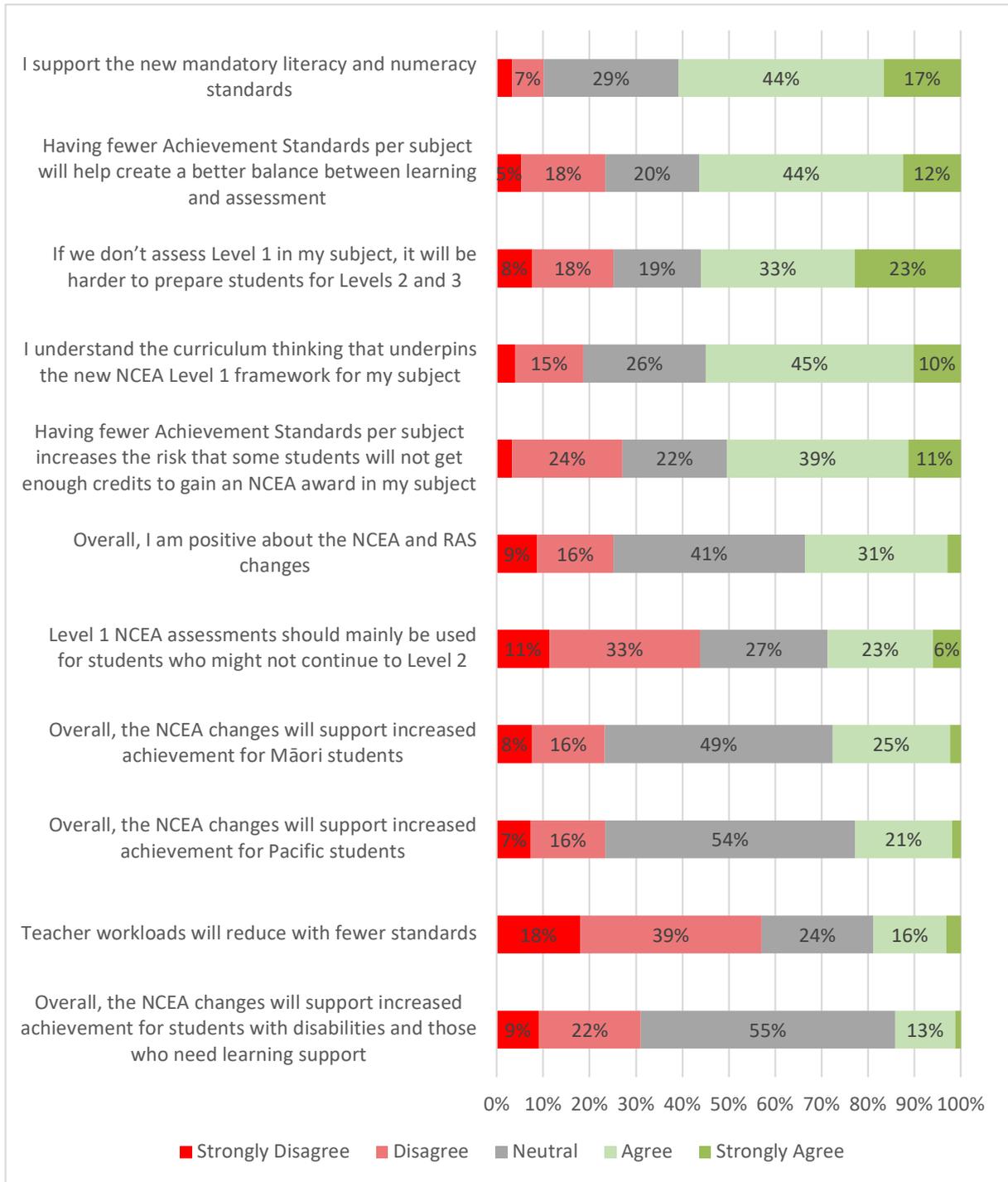
There were some differences in teachers' answers that were related to the subjects they taught.

More English, te reo Māori and other languages teachers, and social sciences and arts teachers thought that having fewer achievement standards per subject will help create a better balance between learning and assessment. Teachers of these subjects were more positive overall about the NCEA and RAS changes.

Fewer maths and science teachers said they understood the thinking that underpins the new NCEA Level 1 framework for their subject, knew where they could get support and advice for making changes to their Level 1 courses, and thought they had sufficient support and advice to be confident about the pilot work.

Themes in the open comments

A total of 329 teachers responded to an open question asking them whether they had "*any comments about the NCEA change process, and what is needed to make it work well for you?*". These comments support the interpretation of the patterns seen in the Likert responses and illustrate specific areas of concern.

Several teachers made positive or hopeful comments. They appear to be taking a "wait and see" approach to the current unknowns, while keeping the challenges in mind, as illustrated by the following quote:

> I understand the rationale for making change to NCEA, and I think that less assessment across all subjects is a good idea. I hope that in the longer term it means less work for teachers but am aware that in the short term it creates more work as we figure everything out. The thing I am concerned with is the availability of exemplars, and specific information to implement this successfully in 2023. Generally speaking, information is slow to arrive, or it is sometimes unclear where to find everything. So, I am nervous for the students in 2023 when it is all very new!

However, this type of comment was in the minority. Many more comments suggested that these uncertainties are generating considerable anxiety. Teachers who expressed concerns want more and better exemplars. They are unconvinced that the changes will work until they see practical details. They also want greater, more timely access to subject-specific advisory support.

Several types of curriculum-related issues were raised. The most common concerned the removal of subjects such as home economics and art history from the list of subjects that will be assessed at Level 1. Other comments equated the reduction in the number of standards with a narrowing of the curriculum, and with more pathways challenges (e.g., not having a sufficient grounding in the subject leading into Level 2). This next comment critiques the timing of RAS in relation to the curriculum refresh currently underway:

> There are real issues with the process and Ministry of Education-imposed limitations on the RAS. It is crazy to do a RAS before a curriculum review. While I think the underlying intentions are good, I don't think that the way it is being implemented is going to achieve what the MoE hopes to achieve. A refusal to consider having any level of prescription (devolved education as a result of Tomorrow's Schools— and the flow on to Localised Curricula) means that there will be an increase in disparity between schools, which ultimately will see a reduction in educational outcomes. NCEA is supposedly a National Certificate. Prescription would allow certainty in including *MUST HAVE* entitlements, in a way that the current philosophical approach to the assessment makes much more difficult. Equally, prescription would allow a much greater provision of resources and support to help teachers improve and refine their delivery of the curriculum.

There were several comments about the changes to the way literacy and numeracy are assessed. While cautiously supportive, teachers expressed concerns for the consequences, with lower achieving students in mind:

> I am in absolute agreement with the extra literacy and numeracy focus. I think if marked honestly, there will be a dramatic decline in achievement, but that will be a truth we need to face. We already know it's there and have done for years. I think the parent community will be in for a shock. I hope

as an English teacher the burden doesn't fall on us alone because the structure and repetition we are going to need to include in our courses to bring them up to where they should be would kill some of our creative aspects which make the subject so great. Primary schools are also going to need to make wholesale change around literacy and numeracy.

Some specific questions were included in the comments. Several of these arguably pertain to current NCEA practices, so are not about change per se, but they are indicative of a range of practical concerns:

How will students with learning disabilities get NCEA Level 1, if they are capable of doing so, but find accessing the classroom or school environment difficult?

I am wondering how many opportunities for assessment we offer for each internal. There is potential that it won't reduce workload at all—it will increase it.

Is the external exam that is not going to be held in T4 going to be marked by teachers or external examiners?

I don't see how only having two standards could be a positive thing. I have several students who fail on their first and second go—what does this mean for these students?

With fewer, but larger, standards, what happens to our transient students who may have completed a standard at their old school, which still needs to be assessed at their new school?

Several teachers made comments about the focus on mātauranga Māori in some of the new achievement standards. These comments have been included with those made in response to another open question that specifically asked about this.

Giving equal status to mātauranga Māori in NCEA

Giving equal status to mātauranga Māori was one of seven key changes to be carried out during the RAS process.

We asked teachers what stage they were at in integrating mātauranga Māori into their teaching:
- 42% were learning about mātauranga Māori and how it relates to their teaching
- 24% were teaching it in their subject area
- 19% were planning for mātauranga Māori in their teaching
- 6% were supporting other teachers to integrate mātauranga Māori in their teaching
- 6% were yet to start
- 2% did not plan to integrate mātauranga Māori in their teaching.

Māori teachers were further ahead in their integration of mātauranga Māori, as described later in the section *Supporting Māori teachers*.

More teachers of English, te reo Māori or other languages, and those teaching social studies or the arts were already teaching mātauranga Māori in their subject area than those teaching maths, science, technology, or PE. More teachers in decile 1–4 schools also taught mātauranga Māori in their subjects.

The Ministry of Education statement about this change to give equal status to mātauranga Māori listed several actions. These include ensuring that "where possible and appropriate, te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori are built into achievement standards for use across English and Māori-medium settings".[6] Ways this change might be achieved included:

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6 All direct quotes in this paragraph were sourced from https://ncea.education.govt.nz/change-2-equal-status-matauranga-maori-ncea

having Māori-centred contexts for exemplars and assessment resources (e.g., local iwi history) and designing more inclusive standards and assessment resources that allow for diverse cultural perspectives on what's important (e.g., considering community or hapū impact, not just individual user needs).

As well as directly addressing what might be assessed, this statement also suggested that pedagogy should be addressed by building "teacher capability around culturally inclusive NCEA and assessment and aromatawai practice that is inclusive of ākonga Māori".

In this short statement, challenges for curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practice are all implied. We wondered which parts of the change teachers had noted—how they understood what is intended, and how they are feeling about this change. They were given an opportunity to make open comments in response to the following question: "*Any comments about the integration of mātauranga Māori, and what is needed to make it work well for you?*". A total of 381 teachers responded to this question, and three main themes were evident in the comments made.

There is in-principle support for this change (with some qualifications)

A number of teachers expressed in-principle support for this change, especially if they were working in schools that were already including elements of mātauranga Māori in the overall school curriculum:

> Our school has been in this journey now for a while, this area I celebrate and support 100%.

> At [name of school] mātauranga Māori is a required addition to planning and is a part of most courses/ classes in some form.

Teachers who were broadly supportive nevertheless expressed reservations for transferring this support to their practice. Having strong support from a teacher of te reo and tikanga was helping build confidence in some cases, but some teachers said they were feeling daunted about the extent of the change needed, and by their own learning needs. Many wanted access to more exemplars, and to subject-specific professional learning that demonstrated the change in their professional context. Even where teachers were feeling more confident, time to write new resources was an issue.

There are different understandings about the intent of the changes

Teachers who understood the changes to be primarily about enhancing inclusion and participation for Māori students expressed several types of reservations. Some worried that the change would be a token one—they would learn a few phrases and greetings etc. but basically make no real changes to the content of their teaching. Some said that the change would lower expectations for Māori students whereas the opposite should be happening. (It was not clear exactly how they thought this dynamic would play out.) Some did not see direct relevance in their school context:

> My concern is that all achievement standards will be geared towards this and it is going to be major overkill. Especially if you teach at a school where very few learners identify as Māori or Pacific learners.

A related concern is that increased attention to the needs of Māori students could come at the expense of the needs of other groups such as those from Asian or Pacific nations backgrounds. Some teachers worried for their colleagues who come from other nations and do not yet have deep knowledge of the New Zealand cultural context.

Teachers who focused on opportunities to use mātauranga Māori contexts when teaching traditional curriculum content raised subject-specific challenges. One issue centred on the purpose for learning the subject: if this purpose is dominated by a focus on success in assessment, then a rich context

could be seen as distracting from the learning of core content, no matter how engaging it might otherwise be:

> It doesn't work currently. For example, in science this year I have tried to incorporate Matariki teachings during the astronomical science assessment we did—as this aligned with Matariki 2021. It is all well and good to teach it—but there are no assessments directly relating to these teachings. Students know this and become frustrated that they are learning something that isn't even relevant to their assessment. I am also trying to incorporate Rēwena bread into our microbiology assessment, but this too does not directly relate to the micro-organism assessment we are doing—so students become frustrated yet again—they are eager to learn these things but get frustrated when the information cannot be assessed.

Another challenge centred on how readily different topics / subject areas lend themselves to the application of mātauranga Māori contexts. Teachers variously thought it would be easier to enact this type of change in the arts, social sciences, and English than in the sciences or mathematics. Some science disciplines (e.g., biology and sustainability) were seen as more relevant than others (e.g., physics and chemistry). One teacher could not see any relevance in digital technologies, specifically programming.

A related set of concerns arises when teachers assumed the change is about directly teaching mātauranga Māori knowledge as curriculum content. Teachers who made responses of this sort tended to be conscious that they had an inadequate knowledge base for directly teaching mātauranga Māori concepts within their subject area. Some science teachers worried about how to juxtapose mātauranga Māori and Western science while keeping the integrity of each intact:

> We need a lot of PD around decoding mātauranga Māori in stories, whakataukī, waiata, etc. and also about the underlying concepts (e.g., mauri, whakapapa beyond the translation and how that relates to science concepts that are to be covered). I want to be able to be confident that I am not offending or misrepresenting the knowledge but don't know how to do that. I also think there will be comparisons drawn between mātauranga Māori and 'Western' science so would like guidance on ways to present both as valid etc. without demeaning the other.

Teachers want more PLD and exemplars

The need for much more help to enact this change was a clear theme in the comments. Many teachers said that they have a lot of personal learning to do before they can support students to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their learning. They did not seem to be gaining the insights they felt they needed from the materials already provided:

> I have so much still to learn. There is a lot of information about the overarching concept, but not about how to specifically incorporate this into our teaching and subject areas. Subject-specific PD on the 'how' not just the 'why' from the MoE is necessary to avoid this becoming tokenistic.

> Integrating mātauranga Māori seems forced. The ideas behind it came across as fine, but upon reading 'the inclusive task' for each standard, the assessment activities aren't organically incorporating the Māori ways. The tokenism could either be a platform to start getting it right or end up doing more damage.

Concern about building an adequate personal knowledge base spanned a spectrum of needs from learning to pronounce Māori words correctly, gaining direct experience of tikanga (e.g., during a noho marae), through to worrying that local iwi and hapū will be overwhelmed with requests for help unless some sort of respectful and genuine coordinated consultation process is followed:

> Actual support from MoE, properly resourced rather than theoretical, and a genuine relationship of the school community with the local Rūnanga/Iwi, not contrived. A true recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi between Crown and Iwi, flowing out through our kaiako and kura to our tamariki. Relationships resourced responsibly and respectfully.

A number of comments implied that the more awareness teachers already have of the differences between knowledge systems, the more likely they are to appreciate what they have yet to learn:

> Yes, staff need to upgrade their competency of Te Reo Māori. Often, they assert a Western view of very complex mātauranga principles and often miss the essence of the teachings from them. I have been doing this for 10 years and I am always learning.

There were some suggestions that processes for direct sharing of successful approaches and resources between teachers and schools could be helpful, so that it is not necessary for everyone to "reinvent the wheel" in their own context, and teacher workloads will be less likely to spiral:

> I have been trying to do this in our department for about 4 years, slowly getting new activities and experiences that work. It takes a lot of thinking, learning, trial and error to come up with things the students connect with. Very little practical, innovative, exciting examples or ideas being shared anywhere. Seems like we are having to make it up ourselves. Our school does try and support us, provides te reo lessons for free which have been amazing, and it is within our PD sessions. Problem is taking this into the classroom. It's hard to do. I think people end up paying lip service, add in a bit and aren't truly doing the hard mahi that is needed. It's just such a big job to try to do. I am supporting my department and have been a lead teacher for a project looking at cultural and place responsive approaches. Even with extra time, teachers have to be creative which doesn't come easily within our system.

A related bonus of sharing successful approaches and resources could be that there is more coherence in learning programmes across schools, and more possibility that progression could be purposefully planned for and enacted. This final quote bundles several of the previous themes together to vividly illustrate the multifaceted nature of the challenges that teachers perceive:

> It is another layer which creates workload. I do wonder whether it might not be overkill for every subject at every level. I would hope that it is planned in schools, so there is progression and variety, so the students don't lose interest. We are a tiny little country, and there is a big world out there. I have been upskilling for a little while, but it is difficult with the constant demands and reality of full-time teaching combined with the high needs of students. My approach is quite fragmented, and then I forget what I've learned. I guess, yet again, I need time to read, and process, and plan for how I would bring this into three subjects across levels. It is uncomfortable being NZ European. Who am I to teach Māori? It's a reluctance which comes from getting it wrong or being insensitive.

3. Teaching and learning

In this section, we cover questions relating to the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning, teaching and learning with digital technologies, working in innovative learning environments, curriculum integration, ability grouping, and assessment for learning.

Impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning

COVID-19 lockdowns and partial school openings impacted teachers' practice through shifting teaching and learning online and having to work with students remotely. Since COVID-19, 51% of respondents said they use digital technology more in their teaching and 28% were neutral. Further, when asked whether they have made, and sustained, changes in their teaching because of COVID-19 and needing to work with students off-site:

- 5% said they have completely changed the way they teach
- 79% said they have taken some things that worked and integrated them into their teaching
- 16% said they went back to how they used to teach.

A total of 339 teachers made comments on COVID-19 and its continuing effects for them and their students. Teachers who said they have completely changed the way they teach were positive about how online teaching and learning has opened possibilities to work in innovative and efficient ways:

> C-19 has been great! It has made teaching become less 'boxed-in' and more global and collaborative.

> I quite enjoy being on lockdown. I am able to plan my lessons easily online.

> Some good learning in terms of how technology can be used to teach.

However, more of the comments expressed concern about the ongoing effects of COVID-19, particularly student access to digital technology. Less than half the teachers (40%) agreed or strongly agreed their students have adequate digital devices and internet access at home for their learning (see Figure 2). This was echoed in the open-ended comments where teachers expressed concerns about students' uneven access to digital devices and stable internet connection, both crucial for their students' online engagement:

> A lack of access to devices is a real challenge. Our school has received some devices but not enough. This has led to real inequities especially in our junior school. Many of our students either could not work during lockdown due to family reasons, being essential workers etc. So many of our most at-need seniors have been significantly impacted by COVID.

> COVID-19 has really affected our students' learning and progress. [Name of school] is a decile 1. Our school is lacking in resource, especially devices to hand out to our students during this time. Some will have one and some will not—especially when there are 2–3 siblings doing online work at the same time and sharing one device. This makes it much [more] challenging for us because it requires us to scaffold work for them in order to catch them up when they access online or keep email a communication tool if they cannot access online … But lacking in devices is a big barrier still in a school like [school name].

> I think it's the infrastructure of the internet/wi-fi quality and having every student connect using devices. We are a decile 3 school where you have very quickly seen the divide between the haves and the have nots.

Practical subjects were difficult to teach online:

> I work in practical subjects. Projects in metalwork and woodwork are in danger of not being completed through no fault of the students or myself. If I cannot pass students who were on track, I will be devastated as will they be. I am not sure if there is the ability for me to address this issue.

> Practical arts are difficult to deliver. Many students I taught did NOT have access to computers or internet. Many had no access to materials or could not afford them.

> As a teacher of a practical subject, it's challenging to format work for online learning that will then be integrated back into the learning programme at school. Materials, physical space for the students to work with art materials.

Teachers also expressed concerns about student wellbeing, citing learning disengagement, anxiety, and difficulties associated with establishing positive rapport online:

> Greater workload in counselling—ongoing anxiety.

> There are always exceptions but, in general, the students are more withdrawn, connecting more digitally but less connected to people and things in their physical surroundings.

> General disengagement any time a lockdown is announced.

> In our school, the critical thing for student achievement is relationships with staff and peers and building self-belief and confidence. Distance learning undermines that.

> Much harder to build working relationships and keep students involved.

Some teachers did not see any benefits or gains from online teaching and learning (citing issues like the ones above):

> I did not cope well. We are not a BYOD school. The changes that I made were not positive for student learning so I did not continue with them.

> We were too keen to get back to business as usual. We lost focus on learning and went back into credits, credits, credits mentality. A real lost opportunity to develop love of learning.

> Online learning is substantially inferior to in-person learning.

Other teachers were already using innovative and digital technologies in their teaching—73% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their classes rely on students being able to use digital devices with internet access (see Figure 2). So, for some, the move to online teaching and learning was business-as-usual:

> As a digital technologies teacher, the use of an LMS (Google Classroom) was already well established in my classroom.

> I was already using Teams for my classes, this year I have used the assessment function. Apart from that, no changes.

> I was already using technology integrated into learning (flipped classroom, Google Classroom, etc.) so I didn't need to change what I did during lockdown.

Teaching and learning with digital technologies

Digital technology use is now widespread in teaching and learning in secondary schools, with indications of good technical support, but concerns around equipment, internet access, and ongoing related PLD (see Figures 2 and 3).

Seventy-four percent of the teachers responding said their classes relied on students being able to access digital devices with internet access, and 73% said they had good technical support to deal with problems. Sixty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed that their school's equipment was adequate and reliable, and 56% agreed or strongly agreed that they had adequate digital devices and internet access at school for students' learning. Just under half (49%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had good access to ongoing PLD and support to develop their use of digital technologies. However, only 40% of the teachers thought that their students had adequate digital devices and internet access at home for their learning.

In 2021, somewhat more teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have good technical support to deal with problems (73%, compared with 67% in 2018) and adequate and reliable school equipment (62%, compared with 54% in 2018).

Digital communication is widespread, and most teachers thought school leaders', students', and parents' expectations of communicating with them through texts and emails were reasonable. Around 13% did not think so.

We found statistically significant associations between teacher ratings and school decile. For the five items below, the higher the decile, the more positive the rating:
1. My students have adequate digital devices and internet access at home for their learning.
2. I have the knowledge and skills I need to provide learning with digital technologies.
3. I have good technical support to deal with problems.
4. The school equipment is adequate and reliable.
5. Adequate digital devices and internet access are available at school whenever my students need them for their learning.

FIGURE 2 **Teachers' views of digital communication and access (*n* = 895)**
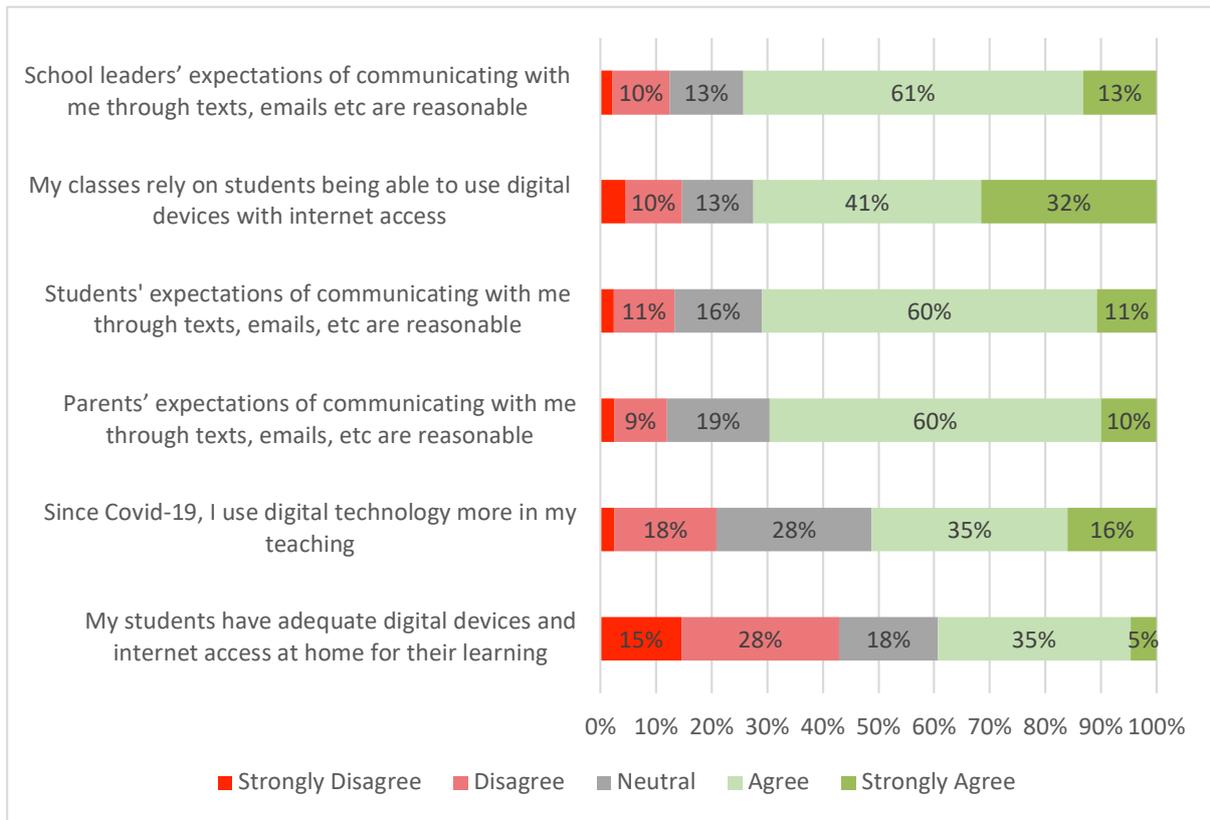
FIGURE 3 **Teachers' views of digital resourcing (*n* = 896)**
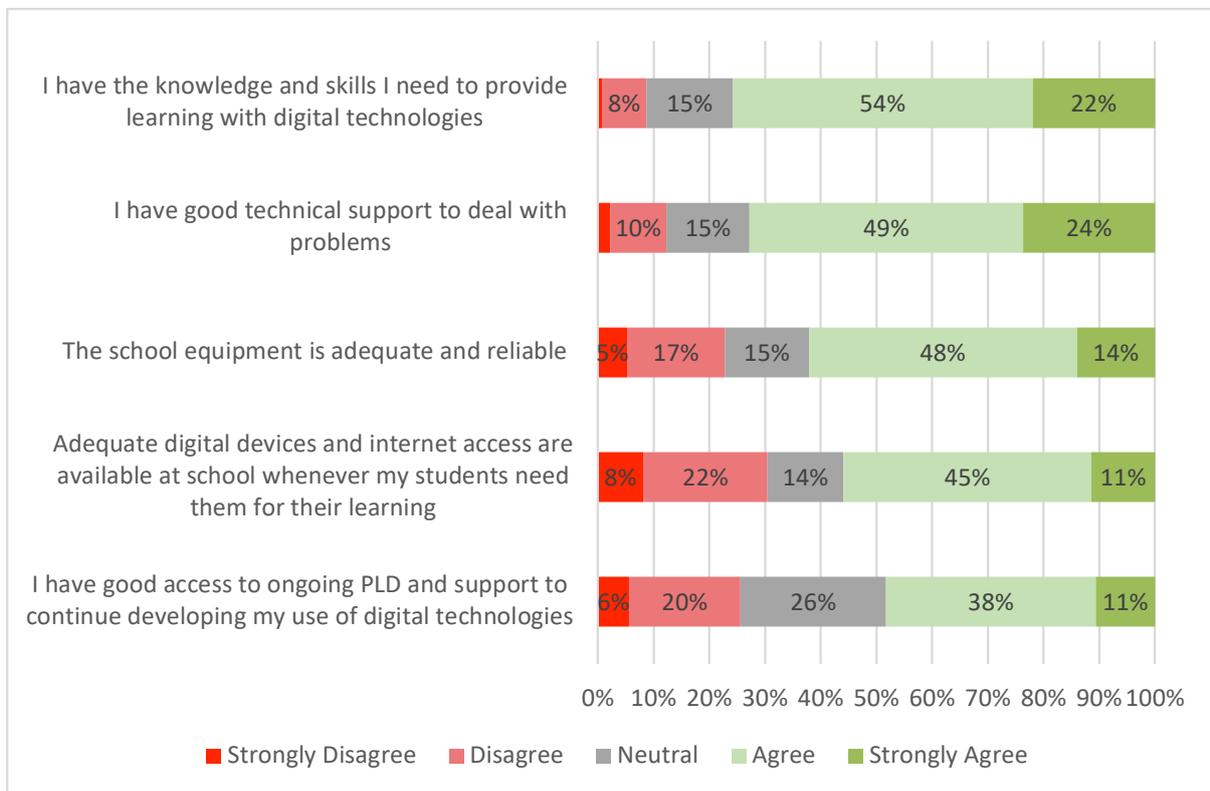
Working in Innovative Learning Environments

Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs) are becoming more common in Aotearoa New Zealand schools.[7] This section summarises secondary teachers' views and experiences of working in ILEs.

Nearly one-third (30%) of the teachers responding worked in an ILE: for some of the time (19%) or all of the time (11%). We asked these teachers additional questions about their experiences working in an ILE.

Overall, teachers' positive ratings of their experiences working in these environments ranged from 24% (for having had useful professional learning focused on ILEs before teaching in them) to 49% (for enjoying teaching in an ILE). Figure 4 shows that around a third of responses were neutral for the items. Responses and comments here highlight the challenges teachers need to negotiate to ensure that benefits that ILEs offer can be fully realised:

- Nearly half (46%) agreed or strongly agreed that working in an ILE allows them to teach in ways that benefit their students' learning, and a further 33% were neutral.
- Almost half (49%) of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy teaching in an ILE, and a further 28% were neutral.
- Nearly half (47%) of the teachers also agreed or strongly agreed that their students enjoyed learning in an ILE, and a further 32% were neutral.
- Forty percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their school's ILE is well designed for teaching and learning, with another 30% neutral.
- Two-thirds (66%) of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that some of their students found learning in an ILE overwhelming, with another 27% neutral.

When asked whether they had had useful professional development focused on ILEs before teaching in them: 45% disagreed or strongly disagreed; 31% were neutral; and 24% agreed or strongly agreed. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed they were supported to work collaboratively in their ILE (38% were neutral, and 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed).

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7   ILE is a term used in New Zealand and internationally to refer to the wider ecosystem of people, practice, and physical space. ILEs are flexible in their nature and enable adaptive as well as collaborative teaching and learning opportunities.

FIGURE 4 **Teachers' views of working in ILEs (*n* = 248)**
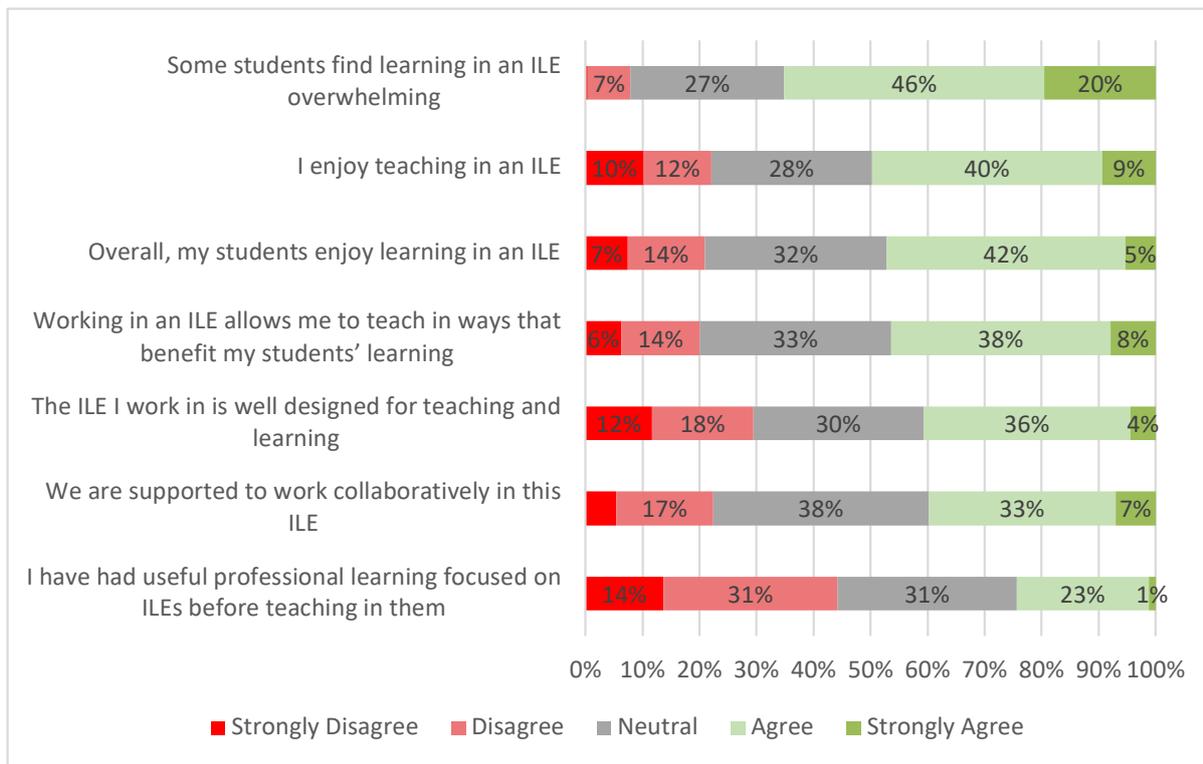
Themes in the open comments

A total of 118 teachers made comments about working in ILEs and gave an example of what helps or hinders effective teaching in them. These comments help to explain teachers' responses to the items in Figure 4 above.

The design of ILEs was a common theme. Some teachers commented that the flexibility of the ILE space helped them to cater for different student needs:

> It helps to have the breakout space outside my classroom because it allows students to work in groups. It allows students who are not strong readers or are not confident speaking in front of others to demonstrate their learning.

> Being able to use space differently for larger groups or allow students to spread out and work independently is very useful, but mostly for non-standard classes. If teaching a regular specialist subject there needs to be a lot more cohesion, which is difficult to achieve in an open, noisy environment where students are surrounded by other classes, ready to be distracted.

However, more teachers commented about the challenges that large, open-plan, and poorly designed ILE spaces presented to teaching and learning. High levels of noise and frequent distractions were common issues that were raised. Some of the teachers' comments suggest that students may not be well prepared or supported to work in this different learning environment:

> Poor design of the actual learning space. Lack of furniture. Some students are not ready to work in ILE.

> Constant distractions from other uses. Space is wrong shape for any effective grouping.

> Noise. I can't hear in a normal room; there is no way I can hear in the bigger rooms. Also, I get hoarse very quickly with trying to speak over loud noise.

Teachers also expressed concern about the impact ILE had on students with complex learning needs:

> ILE does not help anxious students. The noise and overcrowded space can be overwhelming and stop the feeling of safety.

> Students with special needs require more room and extra space to work in.

Respondents' comments suggest that the number of students per class, or the number of classes allocated to each learning space, was larger than what teachers were typically used to working with. In some cases, this increase led to new or exacerbated student behaviour management challenges:

> Increased size of classes together increases the noise level and therefore more time is spent behaviour managing.

> Groups are too large and there is too much noise and distractions for students to concentrate most of time.

Professional learning about ILEs was viewed by many of the respondents as an important factor influencing teachers' success and enjoyment of working in this environment. The majority of comments made about professional learning focused on the support teachers need to make pedagogical shifts to their practice. Several teachers also commented on their colleagues' attitudes to teaching in an ILE:

> If a teacher doesn't change their way of teaching and still stands at the board and delivers work to students in groups or rows, then it doesn't matter what kind of room or environment you put them in … I think that to effectively use an ILE, teachers need PL on how to do it and tools to use to manage any difficult parts of it (noise etc.) and seeing it in action in another school is also very beneficial.

> Our school has ILE but forces us to work with other teachers to do this—I find this method difficult as some teachers have very different styles that are not always suited. Some teachers are forced into the ILE and thus do not have passion for it which affects my teaching as I have to work with them.

> Our school is poorly designed and the PLD to support the pedagogy of an ILE is ad hoc at best. It relies heavily on the individual teacher finding and accessing it. The MoE is insisting on building these schools and then does nothing to support the ongoing pedagogical shifts that are required.

Curriculum integration

Forty-four percent of respondents said they have been involved in integrating two or more learning areas in the past 3 years, an increase from 30% in the 2018 NZCER National Survey of Secondary Schools.

We asked these teachers to rate their experience of doing so, shown in Figure 5 below. Two-thirds (66%) rated their experience as successful or very successful. A further 8% said it was too soon to tell.

FIGURE 5   **Teacher ratings of their experience of integrating learning areas (*n* = 382)**

Experience of integrating learning areas

Category	Percentage
Too soon to tell	8%
Not at all successful	6%
Not very successful	20%
Successful	54%
Very successful	12%
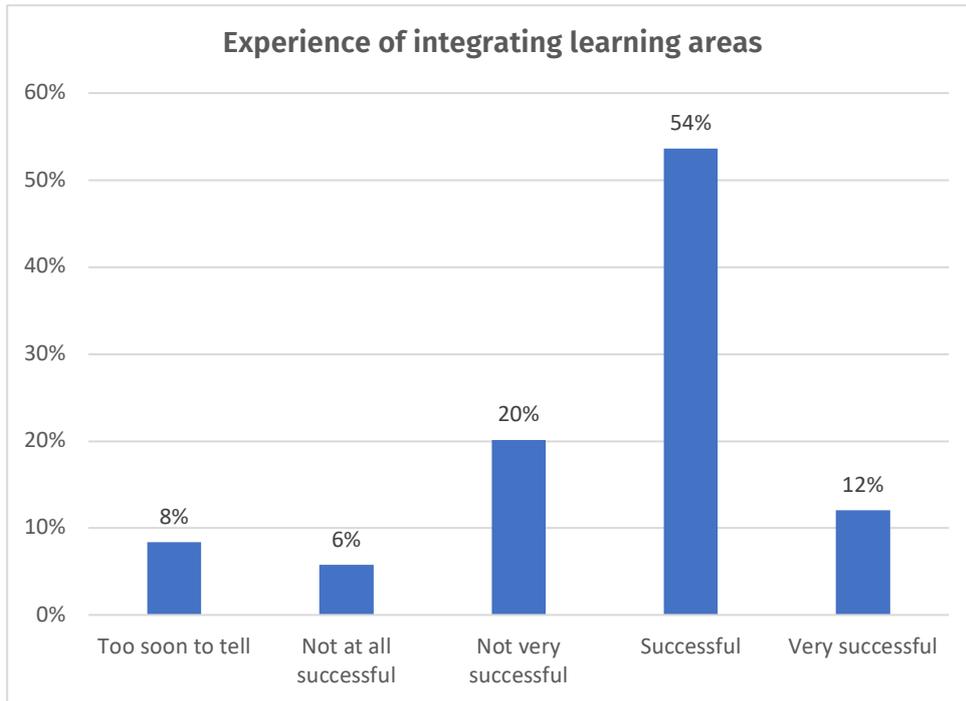
Ability grouping

There is a growing emphasis in educational research and policy on moving away from ability grouping, as it has been shown to have negative effects on student achievement and opportunities to learn.[8] We added a question about ability grouping to the teacher survey for the second wave sent out in Term 4.[9]

Most of the teachers who answered this question said that all their classes were mixed ability (see Figure 6 below).

FIGURE 6 **Teachers' use of ability grouping (*n* = 541)**
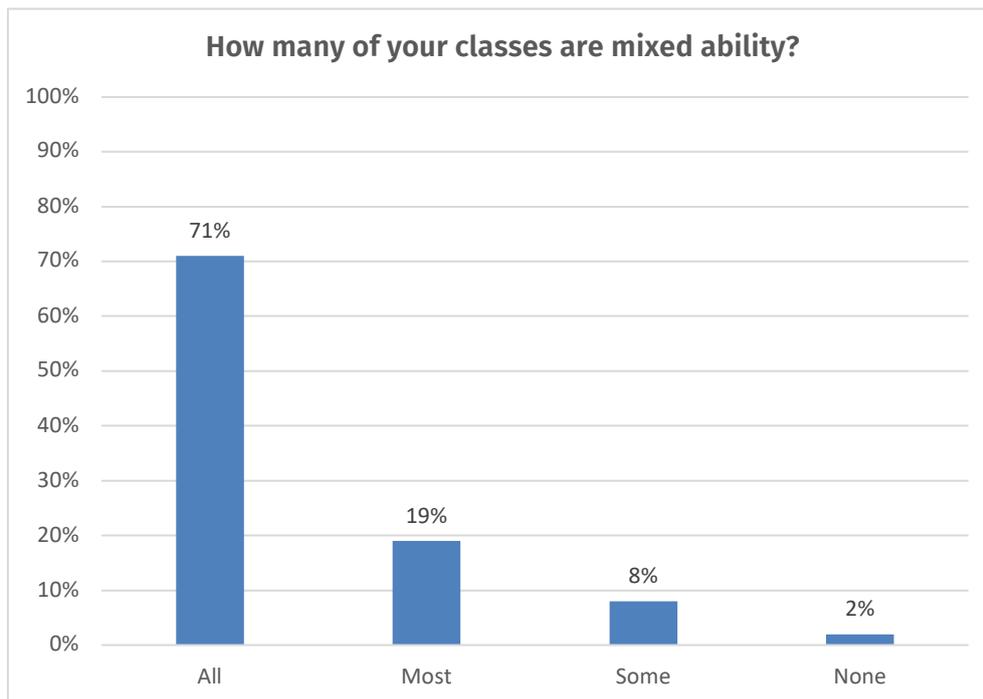
Assessment for learning

Giving students opportunities to be involved in assessment practices is important for helping students take responsibility for their own learning. Table 1 shows that such opportunities occur in most teachers' classes:
- Teachers are most likely to give students opportunities to assess their own work against set criteria (only 12% said they never or almost never do this).
- Teachers are least likely to give students opportunities to document their own learning achievements or help set expected outcomes/standards for assigned work (35% said they never or almost never do this).

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8   See, for example, Davy, A. (2021). He whakaaro: Does streaming work? A review of the evidence. https://www. educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/he-whakaaro/he-whakaaro-does-streaming-work-a-review-of-the-evidence
9   We also added a question about ability grouping in the principals' survey this year.

TABLE 1 **Opportunities for students around assessment for learning (*n* = 908)**

Teacher ratings of how often their students do this in their classes	Never / almost never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time / always
Assess their own work against set criteria	12%	54%	27%	7%
Critique examples of actual work across a range of quality	19%	53%	22%	6%
Assess each other's work and give each other feedback	21%	52%	23%	5%
Document their own learning achievements (e.g., through portfolios, reflection books)	28%	38%	24%	10%
Help to set expected outcomes/standards for assigned work	35%	39%	19%	6%

Fewer opportunities for students to be involved in assessment practices were evident in 2021 than in 2018. There were declines in the proportions of teachers giving such opportunities often or most of the time:

- assessing their own work against set criteria (34%, compared with 54% in 2018)
- critiquing examples of actual work across a range of quality (28%, compared with 42% in 2018)
- assessing each other's work and giving each other feedback (28%, compared with 38% in 2018)
- documenting their own learning achievements (34%, compared with 40% in 2018).

4. Student wellbeing

Student wellbeing is increasingly emphasised as critical to students' learning, and their educational outcomes. This section of the report presents teacher perspectives on wellbeing and behaviour in their school and classes. It shows a rise in teachers' concerns about student wellbeing, their experience of student behaviour that causes serious disruption, as well as some declines in ratings of school-wide processes to support wellbeing. Teachers' views of their own classroom practices related to student belonging and wellbeing are much the same as they were in 2018.

Student wellbeing and behaviour in schools is both a focus and a concern

Many teachers (77%) agreed or strongly agreed that student wellbeing is a strong focus in their school. Schools are also grappling with an increase in mental health issues: 82% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that mental health issues are occurring more often than 2–3 years ago.

Also, 61% of teachers often or sometimes experienced student behaviour causing serious disruption to their teaching, similar to 57% in 2018, but higher than 48% in 2015. The trend in increases in disruptive student behaviour since 2015 is shown in Table 2.

We found statistically significant associations between teacher experiences of disruptive student behaviour, school decile, and years of teaching experience. The more experiences of disruptive student behaviour, the lower the decile and the fewer years of teaching experience.

TABLE 2 **Teacher experiences of disruptive student behaviour 2012–2021**

Teacher experiences of student behaviour causing serious disruption to their teaching	2012 (*n* = 1,266)	2015 (*n* = 1,777)	2018 (*n* = 707)	2021 (*n* = 861)
Often	18%	11%	18%	19%
Sometimes	41%	37%	39%	42%
Rarely	40%	50%	42%	39%

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

However, these trends in wellbeing and behaviour concerns do not seem to be met with increased support. Fewer teachers this year agreed or strongly agreed that vulnerable students in their school can get timely school-based or external support (64%, compared with 86% in 2018). Although 36% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have had training to recognise mental health warning signs in students (comparable with 30% in 2018), this is still a low proportion given their reports of increases in mental health issues among students.

Half the teachers thought their school was good at acting on students' ideas about how to support their wellbeing. However, just over a third (36%) gave a neutral response here, indicating that views

that their school's policies and processes may not include routine gathering of student voice or feedback and making adjustments in response. Figure 7 gives a fuller picture of the items we asked in relation to student wellbeing.

FIGURE 7   **Teachers' views of student wellbeing in their schools (*n* = 879)**
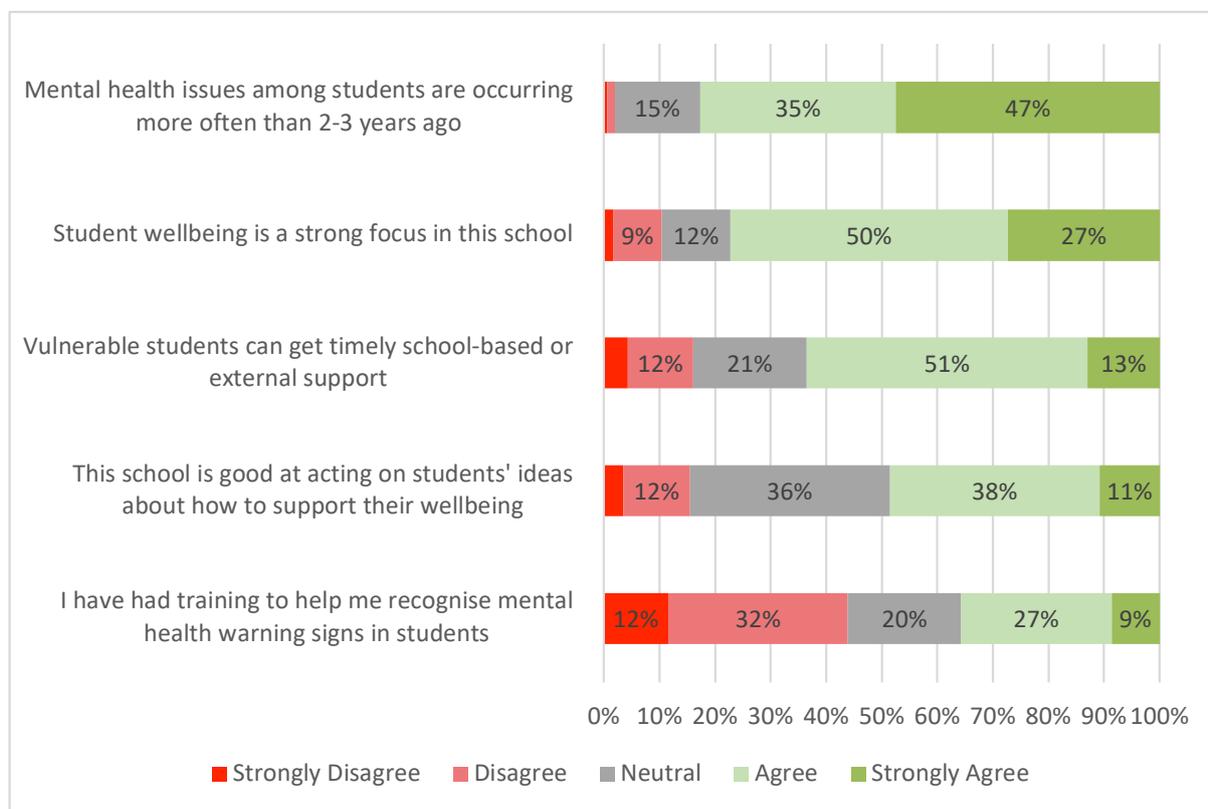
School-wide approaches to address behaviour that can get in the way of learning appear to show some decline

Somewhat less confidence was shown by teachers in school-wide processes in 2021 to address behaviour that can get in the way of learning. Figure 8 below shows that 43%–64% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have clear school-wide processes for this. In 2018, positive ratings of the same bank of items ranged from 52%–77%.[10]

Most notable declines were to do with:
- accessing a team to decide on next steps when managing difficult student behaviour (64% agree or strongly agree, compared with 77% in 2018)
- having consistent and constructive approaches to managing student behaviour (50% agree or strongly agree, compared with 59% in 2018 and 66% in 2015)
- having school-wide processes for addressing student bullying (57%, compared with 65% in 2018).

Like 2018, teachers were least positive about the clarity of school processes for addressing staff behaviours (43% agreement, 28% neutral, and 29% disagreement).

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10 In 2021, we changed the Likert scale options from an embedding scale (Well Embedded, Partially Embedded, Exploring, and Not Done), to an agreement scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). Therefore, positive ratings in 2018 denoted those where teachers selected Well Embedded or Partially Embedded, whereas positive ratings in 2021 denoted those where teachers selected Agree or Strongly Agree.

FIGURE 8 **Teachers' views of school-wide plans and activities to support wellbeing (*n*=865)**
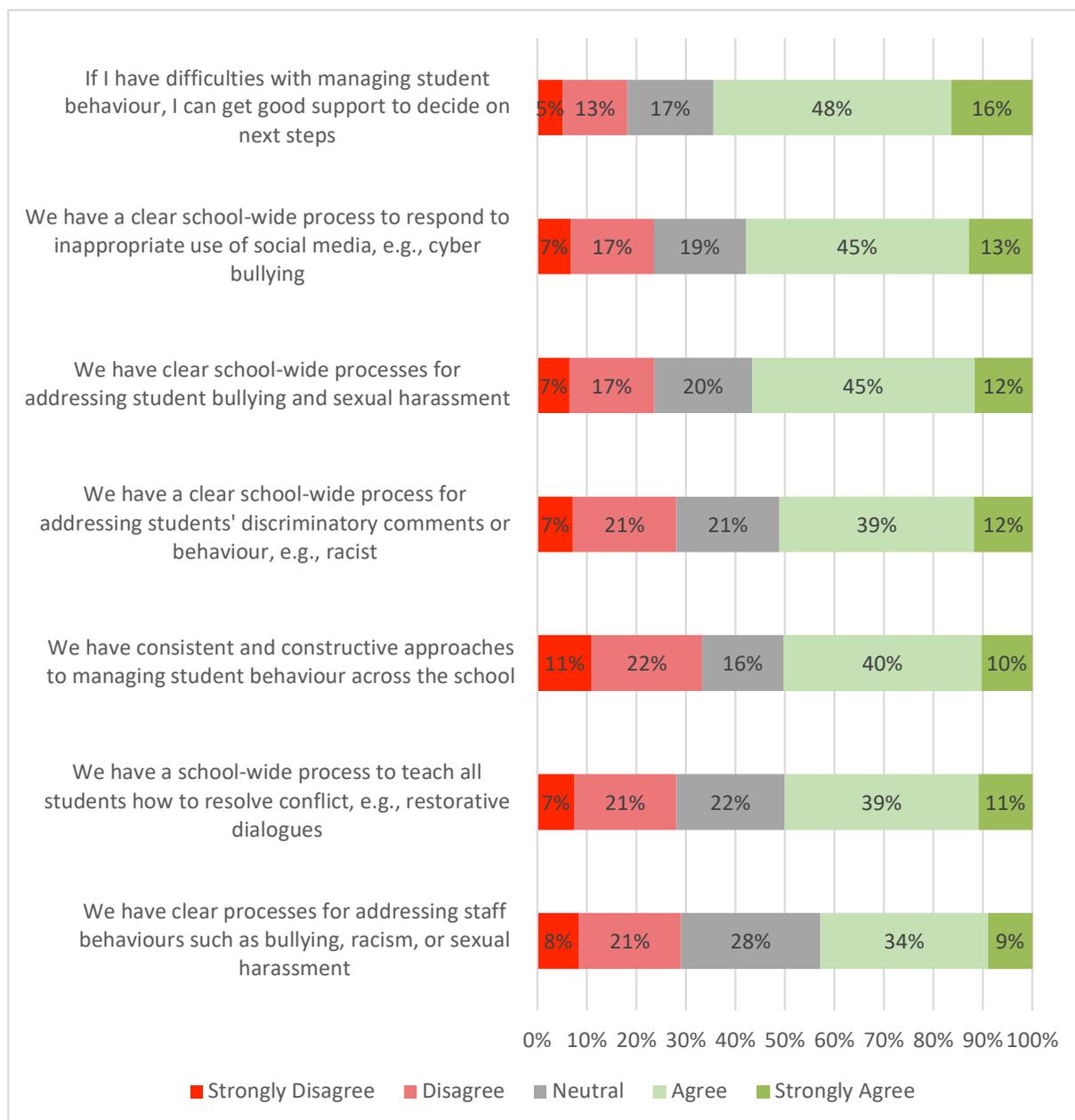
Classroom actions and strategies to support wellbeing

Secondary teachers appeared to be generally positive about what they do in the classroom to promote wellbeing. Figure 9 below shows that 51%–78% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they engage in a range of teaching strategies and approaches to support student wellbeing in the classroom. Similar ratings of these items were also reported in 2018, indicating that the increased emphasis at the national level on some of these practices has yet to make a difference in some classrooms.

Teachers were most positive about promoting Māori cultural values with all students (78% agree or strongly agree), the use of group or peer learning strategies (72% agree or strongly agree), and of inclusive practices for learning (67% agree or strongly agree).

Although teachers were most positive about promoting Māori cultural values (78%), they were not positive to the same extent about incorporating te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in their teaching (66%). The latter likely requires more specific knowledge and confidence.

More teachers appeared to be using group or peer learning strategies to help students build friendships (72%) than directly teaching emotional skills (51%).

There was a statistically significant association between teacher ratings, school decile, and size of the largest class. For the two items below, the lower the decile, the more positive the ratings:
1. I promote Māori cultural values with all students.
2. I incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in my teaching (e.g., mihi, pōwhiri).

FIGURE 9   **Teachers' use of classroom actions and strategies to support wellbeing (*n* = 878)**
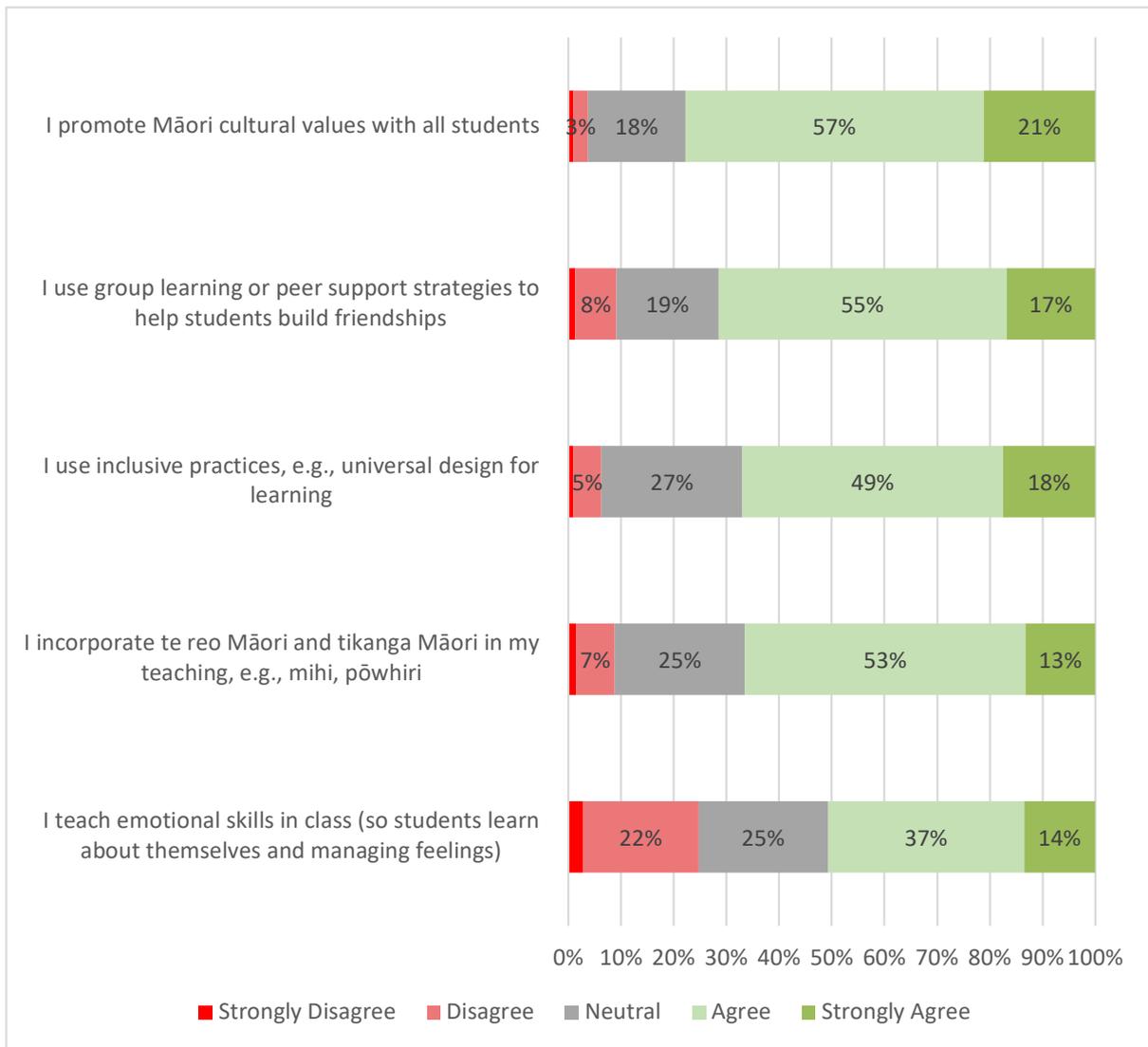
5. Supporting Māori teachers

Why this matters

Increasing the number of Māori teachers, and keeping them, has been a concern for some time. We thought it would be useful to highlight items where there were noticeable differences in what Māori teachers said in comparison with non-Māori teachers, to identify aspects that are important to Māori teachers in their work with students and peers, and how that can be better supported. To do this, we used cross-tabulation to compare Māori teacher responses with non-Māori teacher responses. We also looked at qualitative responses from Māori teachers, which will be used to illustrate key points.

Overview of Māori teacher participants

Eighty-three teachers identified as Māori. The majority of Māori respondents to the survey had been teaching for more than 15 years. Most of them taught Years 9–13 students.

Most Māori teachers who completed the survey were classroom teachers (99%), compared with 78% of non-Māori teachers. Māori teachers also held more form / tutor teacher / academic mentor roles (67%) than non-Māori (52%), along with holding more management units (49%), compared with non-Māori (35%).

Māori teachers taught in all curriculum areas, with most of them teaching in Social science (20%), Te reo Māori (19%), English (19%), and the Arts (17%). Compared with non-Māori, lower proportions of Māori teachers in our sample taught Technology (14%), Mathematics (13%), Science (13%), Physical education or health (8%), and Languages (5%). Māori teachers showed significant leadership around te reo Māori, where only 1% of non-Māori teachers were teaching.

More Māori teachers also indicated that they had been involved in integrating subjects (57%), in comparison with non-Māori (40%).

Māori teacher views on their work

Overall, Māori teachers were positive about their role, with 79% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they enjoy their jobs. Additional to this, 45% of Māori teachers indicated that they had good or very good morale as a teacher, 33% marked their morale as satisfactory, and 21% marked their morale as poor or very poor. These patterns were similar for non-Māori. As Māori teachers indicated higher levels of overwork and work-related stress than non-Māori, the similar levels of positive morale and enjoyment of teaching are noteworthy.

When asked whether their workload is so high that they are unable to do justice to the students they teach, 33% of Māori teachers agreed or strongly agreed, compared with 27% of non-Māori. Similarly, when asked whether their level of work-related stress was manageable, only 27% of Māori teachers agreed, compared with 37% of non-Māori teachers. When asked whether they get the support they

need from their school to do their jobs effectively, 30% of Māori disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with only 19% of non-Māori. This indicates that Māori teachers may be more overworked, experience higher levels of work-related stress, and receive less support from their school than other teachers. The quotes below from final comments made by Māori teachers illustrate these experiences:

> I think teaching has become so much more than just what happens in the classroom. The expectation for teachers and schools to be responsible for the mental health and wellbeing, confidence and capabilities of our young people is growing every year, the pressure is immense and there simply is not enough of us out there. This is not a job that is sustainable for a lifetime; teachers need a break; we need to be refreshed.

> I love my students and the work, but the expectation on our personal time is really difficult to balance.

Māori teacher views on wellbeing at school

Overall, 91% of Māori teachers were aware of increasing mental health issues among their students, which was higher than for non-Māori (81%).

Māori teachers were also generally more nurturing and active in implementing positive wellbeing practices in their classrooms: Māori were more active in incorporating Māori and Pacific cultures into their classroom practice than non-Māori. More Māori (92%) than non-Māori (76%) promoted Māori cultural values with all students. Māori teachers also incorporated more te reo and tikanga Māori into their teaching (88%, compared with 64% of non-Māori teachers). Māori teachers were also incorporating more of their Pacific students' cultures into their teaching practices (47%, compared with 37% of non-Māori teachers).

Māori teachers were comparatively more nurturing of their students' wellbeing and focused more on teaching emotional skills in class (62% Māori, 50% non-Māori), as well as using group or peer support strategies to help students build friendships (79% Māori, 70% non-Māori). Māori teachers also used more inclusive practices, such as universal design for learning, in their teaching than non-Māori teachers (76% Māori, 66% non-Māori).

Māori teacher views on managing behaviour

Māori teachers were generally more critical about whether their school approaches to addressing behavioural issues were clear and consistent. They responded more negatively than non-Māori teachers when asked about their school's approaches to addressing behaviour such as bullying, racism, and sexual harassment.

Forty percent of Māori teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that their school had consistent and constructive approaches to managing student behaviour across the school, compared with 33% of non-Māori teachers. When asked whether their school had clear processes for addressing bullying and sexual harassment, 37% of Māori disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with 28% of non-Māori teachers.

Māori teachers were also more critical when it came to whether their schools had adequate and clear processes to respond to cyber-bullying (36% of Māori disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with 22% of non-Māori) and racism (37% of Māori disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with 27% of non-Māori).

More Māori teachers also indicated that they often experience student behaviour that causes serious disruption to their teaching (27% Māori, 19% non-Māori).

Accumulation of these factors could contribute to negative and unsafe school environments for Māori teachers as well as students.

Māori leadership in mātauranga and te reo

Māori teachers were more adept at speaking te reo Māori in day-to-day conversation than non-Māori teachers, with 27% of Māori able to speak te reo well or very well, compared with only 1% of non-Māori, and 23% of Māori able to speak te reo Māori fairly well, compared with only 7% of non-Māori. Overall, 92% of non-Māori teachers indicated little to no ability to speak Māori in day-to-day conversation, compared with 50% of Māori teachers. As noted, Māori were most likely to be te reo Māori teachers at the secondary school level.

However, Māori teachers also indicated having fewer opportunities for professional development regarding te reo Māori, with 31% of Māori teachers strongly disagreeing that they had received professional learning in regard to te reo Māori, while only 19% of Māori said they did not have this opportunity. Māori also disagreed more strongly that their professional development helped them to use more te reo Māori in their class (26%), compared with non-Māori who disagreed that they had this opportunity (16%).

Since Māori are leaders in this space, it may be that their expertise in te reo Māori is taken for granted. However, it is important to consider that not all Māori are fully competent in te reo Māori. It is therefore important that Māori teachers also receive opportunities to improve their skills in te reo Māori, especially since it is their ancestral language.

Māori teachers were, perhaps unsurprisingly, more active when it came to incorporating mātauranga Māori into the curriculum, with 36% of Māori teachers already incorporating mātauranga into their teaching, and 23% of Māori teachers providing support for other teachers to integrate mātauranga Māori. In contrast, 18% of non-Māori teachers were incorporating mātauranga Māori in their teaching, and 4% were providing support for others to integrate mātauranga Māori. Many non-Māori teachers (44%) were still learning about what mātauranga Māori meant and how it related to their teaching.

As with te reo Māori, it should not be expected that Māori teachers will all hold the same amount of knowledge. While some Māori teachers explained that they have a strong understanding of what mātauranga Māori is, others were still uncertain about what mātauranga Māori meant:

> Fortunately, I have a degree in mātauranga Māori (Te Wānanga o Raukawa) and I work in two subject areas where integration occurs naturally …

> It is unclear to me what mātauranga Māori means and entails, so that is a difficulty I am trying to grasp and come to terms with. This will help me to be able to incorporate it into my teaching.

Some teachers, in their open comments, addressed potential challenges that schools should be wary of in this space:

> This will really challenge those who have no clue about mātauranga Māori and are either not in agreeance of it or are against Māori beliefs.

> Tokenism. Tokenism is a worry as I worry about my peers' ability to integrate ao Māori in a genuine way. Significant PD is needed in this area.

Some Māori teachers also spoke about the ongoing demands of having to balance te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori leadership with their classroom teaching:

> I am one of 4 Māori … in our school. Our entire SMT is Pākehā, most of the staff are Pākehā. The time demands on the Māori staff to upskill, educate, talk, support, provide resources and connections is very high. That doesn't take into account the emotional battles you have to undertake in order to have Māori views and tikanga acknowledged in your school and the emotional and physical toll this has on you as a Māori in a colonial system.

> I feel that, as a teacher that is Māori, the expectation to share my knowledge is above and beyond my duties.

A specific challenge for Māori teachers, reflected in the above quotes, is how much schools and senior leaders rely on Māori staff when it comes to things related to mātauranga, tikanga, and te reo Māori.

Twenty-nine percent of all teachers said their school had a Māori language plan for teaching and learning te reo Māori, 26% said their school did not have a Māori language plan, and 45% were unsure.

As te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori become more embedded within the curriculum, professional development and specific time allocations for Māori teachers to advise on "all things Māori" need attention, particularly since Māori teachers often already have higher workloads than non-Māori teachers.

Things Māori teachers wanted to change

As shown in Table 3 below, Māori teachers had a range of things they wanted to change in their work as teachers, and more wanted change than their non-Māori colleagues. The main change they would make to their work was a reduction in administration and paperwork. Māori teachers also wanted more non-contact time to work with other teachers, followed by a reduction in the number of initiatives at one time, and more opportunities to increase their te reo Māori competency.

TABLE 3   **Changes Māori teachers would make to their work**

What are the main things you would change about your work as a teacher?	Māori %	Non-Māori %
Reduce administration/paperwork	75	45
More non-contact time to work with other teachers	53	38
Reduce number of initiatives at one time	52	41
More opportunity to increase my te reo Māori competency	52	31
Improve teachers' status in society	51	35
More time to reflect/read/plan	48	39
Reduce class sizes	48	37
More sharing of knowledge/ideas with teachers from other schools	48	36
Better pay	45	32
More support for me to teach students with behaviour issues	45	25
More support staff	41	28
Reduce assessment workload	40	26
More opportunity to connect with whānau	40	16
More appreciation of my work from my school's management	39	22
More access to PLD	34	21
Reduce pace of change	27	23
More support for me to adapt *NZC* for students who need learning support	27	17
Nothing	1	0

The following quote illustrates that some Māori teachers wanted te reo Māori to be given more status and mana, so they could focus on it in its own right, without being overworked with extra commitments:

> [For] Te Reo Māori [to] become its own subject and receive funding and resourcing so that my students get more of me, rather than me doing 100 other things then teaching.

Māori teachers are future-focused

Māori secondary teachers were more future-focused and showed a greater desire for career advancement and professional growth or learning than non-Māori secondary teachers. A fifth of Māori teachers (20%) are interested in becoming a principal, compared with 8% of non-Māori teachers.

As shown in Table 4 below, more Māori wanted to move into leadership roles than non-Māori. More Māori teachers also wanted to begin or complete postgraduate qualifications than non-Māori. However, Māori were also more likely to want to change schools or leave the profession entirely before retirement, compared with non-Māori teachers. This may be reflective of their comparatively

high workloads and levels of stress, and greater experience of unsupportive school environments. It may also reflect the demand for their te reo Māori and cultural knowledge beyond education. The interest in changing schools may also be a reflection of the desire to build leadership skills and advance their career.

TABLE 4 **Māori teachers' career plans for the next 5 years**

Teacher career plans for the next 5 years	Māori (*n* = 83) %	Non-Māori (*n* = 1,024) %
Build my leadership skills	37	16
Continue as I am now	30	29
Change schools	30	12
Begin or complete a postgraduate qualification	29	9
Apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship	24	12
Take on leadership role with management units	22	11
Retrain/change to a career outside education	22	9
Change careers within education	20	7
Increase level of responsibility within teaching (e.g., SCT, Kāhui Ako role)	17	7
Take on middle management role	12	9
Take on senior management role	10	6
Leave teaching for personal reasons (e.g., family)	10	3
Retire	7	11
Not sure	7	6
Get a teaching job overseas	7	3
Get a permanent position	7	3

The following quotes from Māori teachers' overall comments about their jobs illustrate experiences that lead Māori teachers to consider leaving teaching:

> Teaching is all give, give, give and there is little in return. Burn out is common. [I] don't feel safe with some students or parents.

> I love teaching for the fact that I develop great relationships with students and can get the best out of them to learn. My biggest struggle is the poor management within the school which has made me feel unsafe and undervalued—hence why I am considering leaving the teaching industry.

> I am leaving teaching because I have other things to do as an artist and creative, not because it's a terrible career. Teaching has been great. Full on and I wouldn't want to go any higher than I am now. The stress does get to me sometimes and the amount of change is unbelievable. Nothing stays the same and change is the new norm. I am a bit burnt out and need to return to me.

6. Supporting Pacific learners

This section describes what teachers reported in relation to support for Pacific learners, using six items from different questions shown in Figure 10.[11]

Teachers were most positive about making a point of knowing which Pacific cultures their Pacific students identify with (64% agreed or strongly agreed) and facilitating opportunities for Pacific learners to support each other (62% agreed or strongly agreed), thereby building positive relationships.

Slightly more teachers reported making a point of getting to know the cultures of each of their Pacific students' identity in 2021 (64%, compared with 60% in 2018). This could indicate that teachers are paying more attention to the diversity of Pacific learners they are working with.

Sixty-one percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they had had practical help from their professional learning in the past 3 years around building positive relationships with Pacific students in their classes, and 53% about improving the progress of Pacific students. However, fewer teachers (38%) agreed or strongly agreed that they incorporate Pacific students' cultures in their teaching, indicating the need for further professional learning in this area.

Less than a quarter of the teachers (23%) agreed or strongly agreed that the NCEA changes will support increased achievement for Pacific students.

There was a statistically significant association between teacher ratings and school decile. For the three statements below, the lower the decile, the more positive the ratings:
1. I make a point of knowing which Pacific cultures each of my Pacific students identify with.
2. I provide Pacific students with opportunities to work together and support each other.
3. I incorporate Pacific students' cultures in my teaching.

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11 There were insufficient survey responses from Pacific teachers to document separately in this report.

FIGURE 10 **Teachers' views in relation to supporting Pacific learners (*n* = 878)**
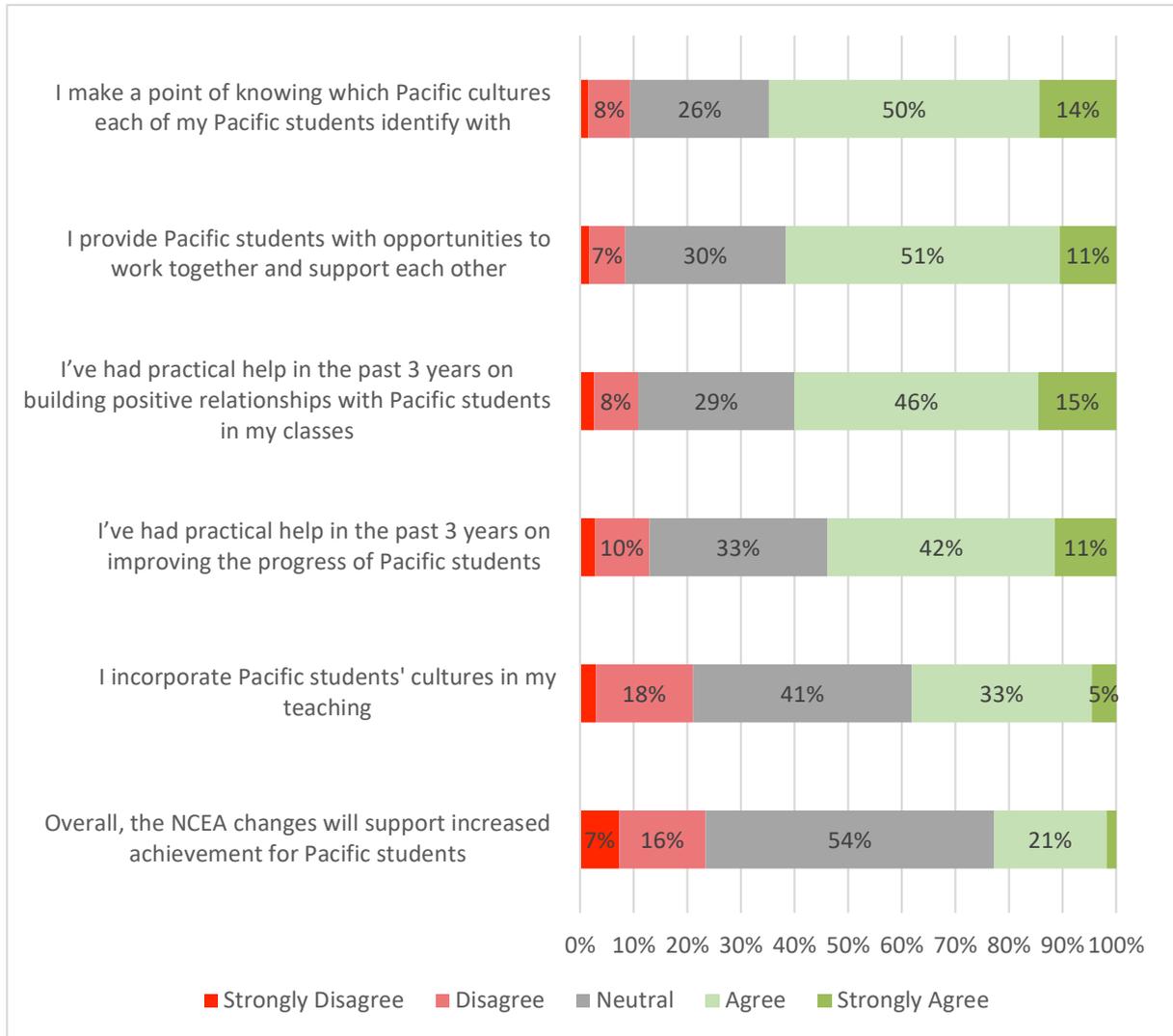
7. Teachers' work, the new Professional Growth Cycle, and PLD

Eighty-four percent of those responding to the 2021 survey in August–September were class/subject teachers.

As in previous surveys, many teachers take additional roles:
- form teacher / tutor teacher / academic mentor (57%)
- holder of management units (39%)
- head of department (HoD), head of learning area (HoLA), or faculty leader / teacher in charge (35%)
- dean (9%)
- associate principal / deputy principal (6%)
- associate teacher for students on practicum (9%)
- Kāhui Ako within-school teacher (6%)
- specialist classroom teacher (4%).

Other school roles that we asked about were held by 3% or less of teachers responding (SENCO/ Learning Support Coordinator, staff representative on the school board, careers adviser / transition teacher, Kāhui Ako across-school teacher, and guidance counsellor). Thirteen percent noted other roles we had not asked about.

Class sizes

We asked teachers the size of their smallest and largest classes to get some idea of the variation of the number of students they teach in each class. Table 5 shows that the median class size varies from 17 students for teachers' smallest class, to 29 students for their largest class.

Fifty-one percent of the teachers responding identified reducing class sizes as one of the things they would change about their work as a teacher.

TABLE 5   **Secondary teachers' smallest and largest classes (*n* = 1,025)**

	Smallest class—number of students	Largest class—number of students
Minimum	1	1
Maximum	56	99
1st quartile	12	26
3rd quartile	22	31
Median	17	29
Mean	16.81	28.20
Standard deviation	7.03	7.18

Professional learning and development

Teachers' PLD is both formal and informal. They indicated spending a median time of 20 hours in formal PLD in 2021. This time varied from no formal PLD to 1,000 hours, with a mean of 30.4 (SD = 70.5).

Most of this formal PLD time was not on topics that teachers were identifying for themselves. They spent a median of 5 hours on such topics, with a mean of 14.4 hours (SD = 67), and a range from 0 to 1,000 hours.

Experiences of professional learning over the past 3 years

We asked teachers about nine professional learning experiences that are likely to support their growth and effectiveness as teachers. Their responses indicate variable use or access. Departmental discussions about teaching practices that enriched their work topped the set shown in Figure 11 below but were only experienced by two-thirds of teachers. Incidentally, the important role such discussions can play in improving teaching and learning underlines the importance of supporting and developing middle leaders such as HoDs. About 36% agreed or strongly agreed that they had found whole-school PLD useful.

FIGURE 11 **Professional learning over the past 3 years (*n* = 846)**
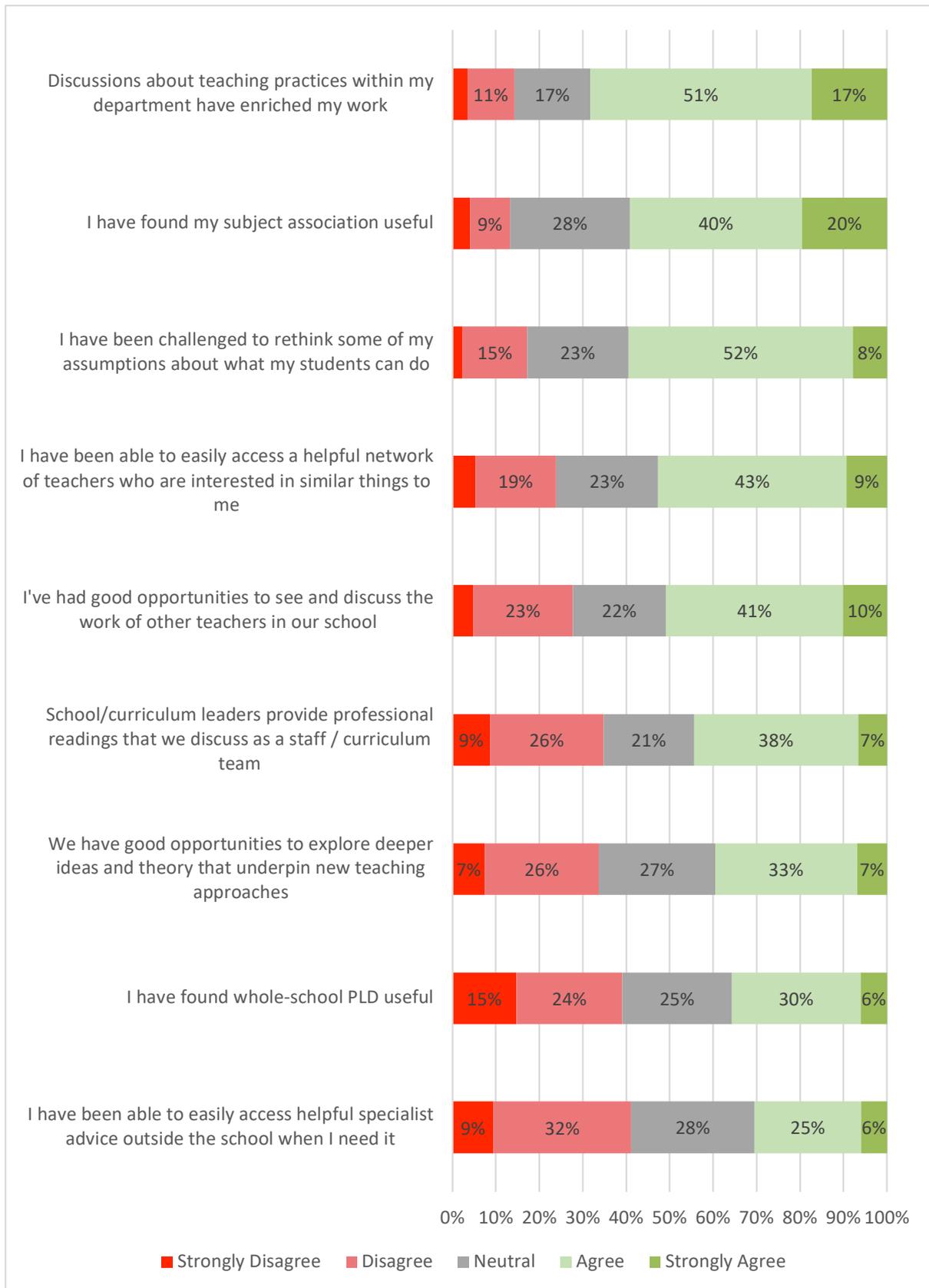
Five items in this bank about professional learning were also asked in the 2018 NZCER National Survey of Secondary Schools.

Views of the usefulness of their subject association over the past 3 years were much the same in 2021 as in 2018.

However, teacher responses were less positive in 2021 in relation to these items:
- easy access to helpful specialist advice outside the school when needed: 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed in 2021, compared with 27% in 2018
- good opportunities to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new teaching approaches: 34% disagreed or strongly disagreed in 2021, compared with 22% in 2018
- easy access to a helpful network of teachers who are interested in similar things to me: 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed in 2021, compared with 15% in 2018
- challenged to rethink some of my assumptions about what students can do: 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed in 2021, compared with 10% in 2018.

COVID-19 interrupted schooling in 2020, and again in the Auckland area particularly in 2021, which may have affected teachers' answers here, even though the question asked about the past 3 years.

Professional learning gives many teachers some practical help in key policy areas, but not all.

Changing practice draws on good-quality PLD as well as school cultures that actively support well-founded teaching and learning practice. We asked what practical help teachers had had from their professional learning.

Figure 12 shows that over half the teachers mostly thought their professional learning had been of some practical help. This ranged from 73% having some practical help from their PLD to build positive relationships with Māori students in their class, to 15% with teaching te reo Māori. Just under half thought their professional learning had practically helped them to use more te reo in their classrooms, and 44%, to develop localised curriculum.

FIGURE 12 **Practical help from professional learning over the past 3 years (*n* = 840)**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Building positive relationships with Māori students in my classes		4%	21%	54%	19%
Understanding tikanga Māori	3%	6%	24%	52%	14%
Improving the progress of Māori students		7%	26%	51%	14%
Building positive relationships with Pacific students in my classes		8%	29%	46%	15%
Supporting students' social and emotional learning		11%	27%	44%	15%
Actively involving students with disabilities or who need learning support in my classes		11%	27%	45%	13%
Building positive relationships with whānau		10%	29%	45%	12%
Learning te reo Māori	5%	15%	27%	43%	12%
Improving the progress of Pacific students		10%	33%	42%	11%
Improving the progress of students with disabilities or who need learning support		12%	31%	44%	9%
Using te reo Māori in my classes	4%	14%	27%	47%	
Developing localised curriculum	7%	16%	33%	35%	9%
Teaching te reo Māori	15%	31%	38%	13%	

Introduction of the Professional Growth Cycle shows some benefits

After the 2019 collective contract negotiations between the Ministry of Education, PPTA, and NZEI, requirements for annual appraisal of teachers were removed, with the intention of replacing what had often become time-consuming accountability processes. The Teaching Council and a cross-sector working group developed elements of a Professional Growth Cycle, focusing on how teachers use and meet *Our Code, Our Standards | Ngā Tikanga Matatika me Ngā Paerewa* in their everyday practice, as well as supporting professional learning and collaboration.[12] The Professional Growth Cycle was first used in schools in 2020.

By 2021, many of the teachers responding to this question noticed some improvement. The change to the Professional Growth Cycle:
- reduced workload (43%)
- allowed useful reflection and discussion (36%)
- gave some meaningful goals (23%)
- led to useful professional development (14%).

However, for others:
- it made no real difference (41%)
- their school was not sure what to do (14%)
- workload increased (9%).

A total of 295 teachers made a comment here. Some were very positive about reduced workload, getting more meaningful feedback that they could use, and experiencing higher trust:

> Much more user friendly. Less pointless paperwork to prove I did what I did. No mandatory inquiry.

> It has taken a lot of pressure off by not having to produce a large portfolio of evidence.

> Created a meaningful environment in which to learn and stretch rather than tick a box.

> It has been beneficial in terms of having good, robust professional discussions around improvements, strengths rather than weaknesses.

> I am enjoying the authenticity of the PGC cycle and am thoroughly enjoying coaching staff. I feel this is the closest 'appraisal' has been to reflective practice and what we do as teachers to improve our pedagogy.

Others noted superficial changes:

> It is exactly the same as appraisal. Our school has just called it Professional Growth Cycle—made a new doc that looks nice but all of the rest is exactly the same. My appraiser is the exact same person it usually is. And this is the same school wide.

> We basically are doing a shortened version of what we used to do but rather than call it a 'portfolio' or an 'inquiry', it is called another name in a different format.

> Still no real professional dialogue takes place about my growth as a teacher within the profession. Appraisers don't know how to coach/instruct teachers on what courses are available to develop them as professionals. There's still a huge gap for developing teachers.

> It was the same as it was before with a different name—same amount of work, same amount of paperwork.

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12 https://teachingcouncil.nz/professional-practice/professional-growth-cycle/

School continued to do everything almost exactly the same while telling us that we have so much more time because there is no appraisal.

Some noted an impact from the COVID-19 pandemic:

We started out on a good track but as we have been in lockdown for almost half the year we have not gone back to any of it so we can focus on the kids for now, which is a good thing, but really we have done nothing lately around the professional growth cycle stuff.

It's better, but hard in the very broken and busy year.

Honestly, I'm not really sure what a professional growth cycle is. Extended lockdown is probably part of this. I think we were just going to get to that in our PD.

Some found their school managers reluctant to change, and others wanted better support so that the change occurred consistently across the country:

There was resistance from the DP in charge who did not understand the changes and therefore ignored them and continued doing what they wanted to do. When push back occurred they became combative.

Our SLT have reacted to the PGC by trying to bring in more paperwork. They are uncomfortable with the idea of a high trust model.

Our school does it really well, but it seems unfair that it is so dependent on who runs it in each school. Clear expectations and a flowchart should be available to everyone so that the expectations are the same across the country.

It has decreased the mana of professional learning in many respects. Less sense of being accountable for some teachers. Conversations rely on the ability of both parties to have meaningful professional conversations. Feels like it is less of a priority than it used to be. There is an assumption that a 'professional leader' knows how to have these conversations, but no training provided. This is the biggest flaw.

Some could not see that this structured approach was compatible with trust and individual professionalism:

There is still a fundamental lack of trust built in to the model and little acknowledgement that as a professional I am constantly reviewing, evaluating, and critiquing my teaching, my lessons, my units of work, my assessment tasks, my teaching environment; partaking in professional learning and development which is relevant … The assumption in the existing model is that teachers are not competent or not willing to improve themselves—the assumption should be reversed: teachers do the self-reflection naturally and only when there is an obvious issue should there be an intervention with assistance, guidance, and mentoring. This would be a far better use of limited resources, reduce workload, improve wellbeing, and allow the majority of teachers to get on with their job.

Some experienced a clash between school and personal goals:

I feel I can no longer set my own goals. Every goal is set around what my school thinks is important and what they want to achieve, not what I am interested in, think is a personal shortfall, or would like to investigate (unless by chance they coincide).

Teachers in mentor roles for provisionally certificated teachers are positive about the role but more could be done to prepare and support them

Mentor teachers play a key role in the transition of teachers leaving initial teacher education to successful classroom teaching. Thirteen percent of the respondents were mentor teachers, and their responses are shown in Figure 13. Most of these mentors agreed or strongly agreed that they understand their role (85% of the mentors), and many see it as an important part of their own career pathway (60%). Many also agreed or strongly agreed that other teachers valued their role as a mentor (62%). However, there was less agreement that they had time allocated for the role (56%), or that their principal valued it (53%). Also, only 39% agreed or strongly agreed they have had useful professional learning focused on being an effective mentor. Overall, mentor teachers' views of their role are much the same as in 2018.

FIGURE 13 **Mentor teachers' views of their role (*n* = 103)**
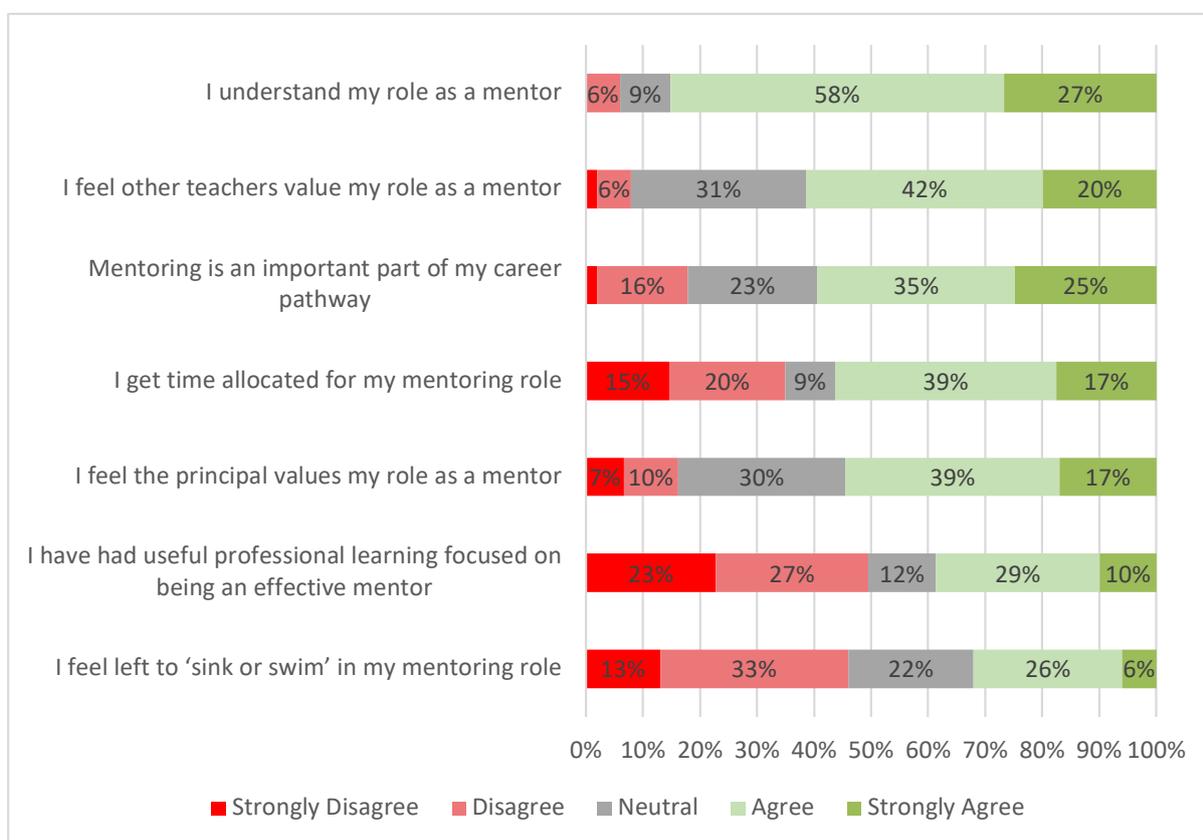
Most secondary teachers enjoy their jobs, but more could be done about their workloads

Secondary teachers enjoy their jobs. As Figure 14 also shows, the proportions who feel supported, and that they are working in a school that cares about the wellbeing of its staff, is somewhat lower.

Figure 15 shows that nearly half of secondary teachers thought their workload was fair (41%) and manageable (43%), and just over a third (36%) thought they could manage the level of work-related stress they encountered.

Twenty-seven percent thought their workload was so high they could not do justice to all their students. There was a statistically significant association between teacher ratings here and size of the largest class: The larger their largest class size, the more they thought their workload was so high they could not do justice to all their students.

FIGURE 14 **Teachers' job satisfaction (*n* = 820)**
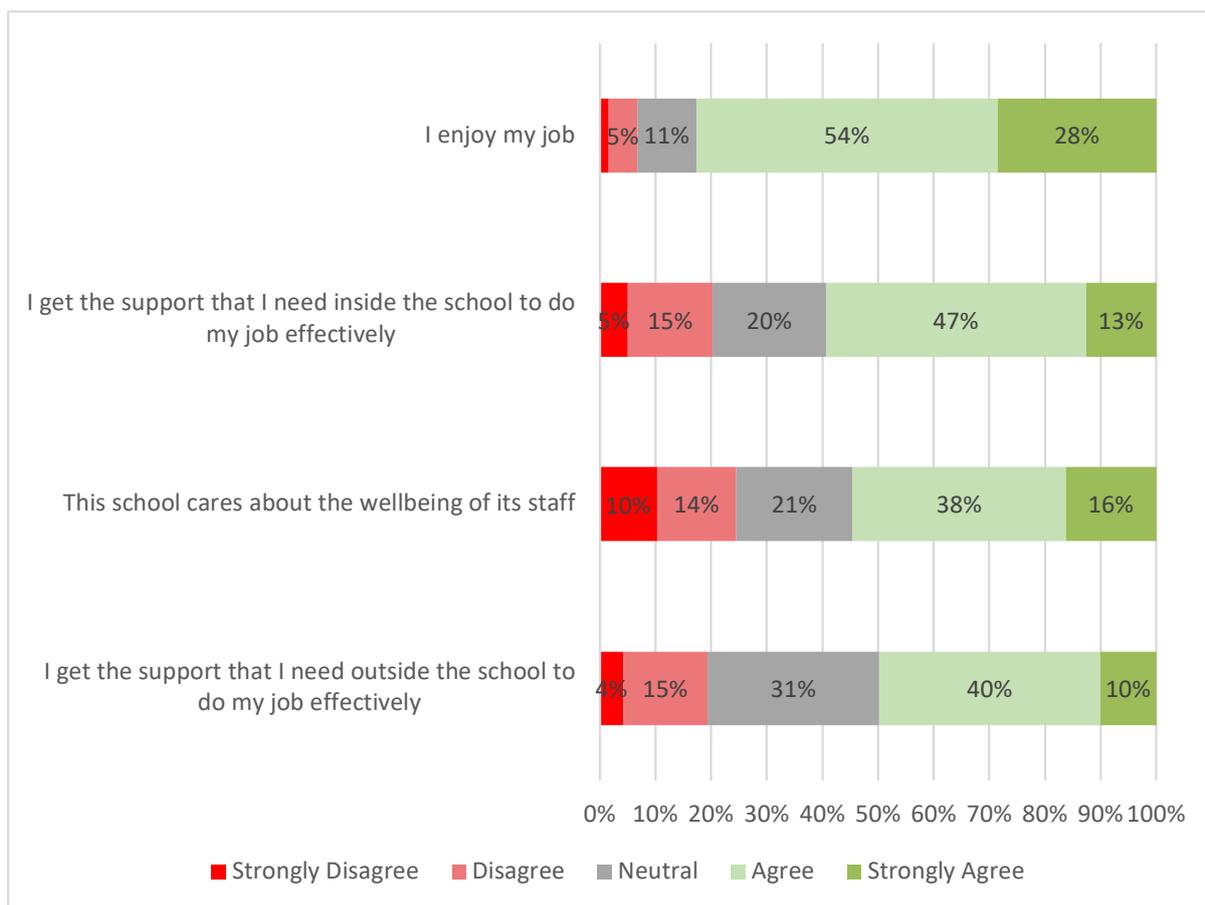
FIGURE 15 **Teachers' workloads (*n* = 816)**
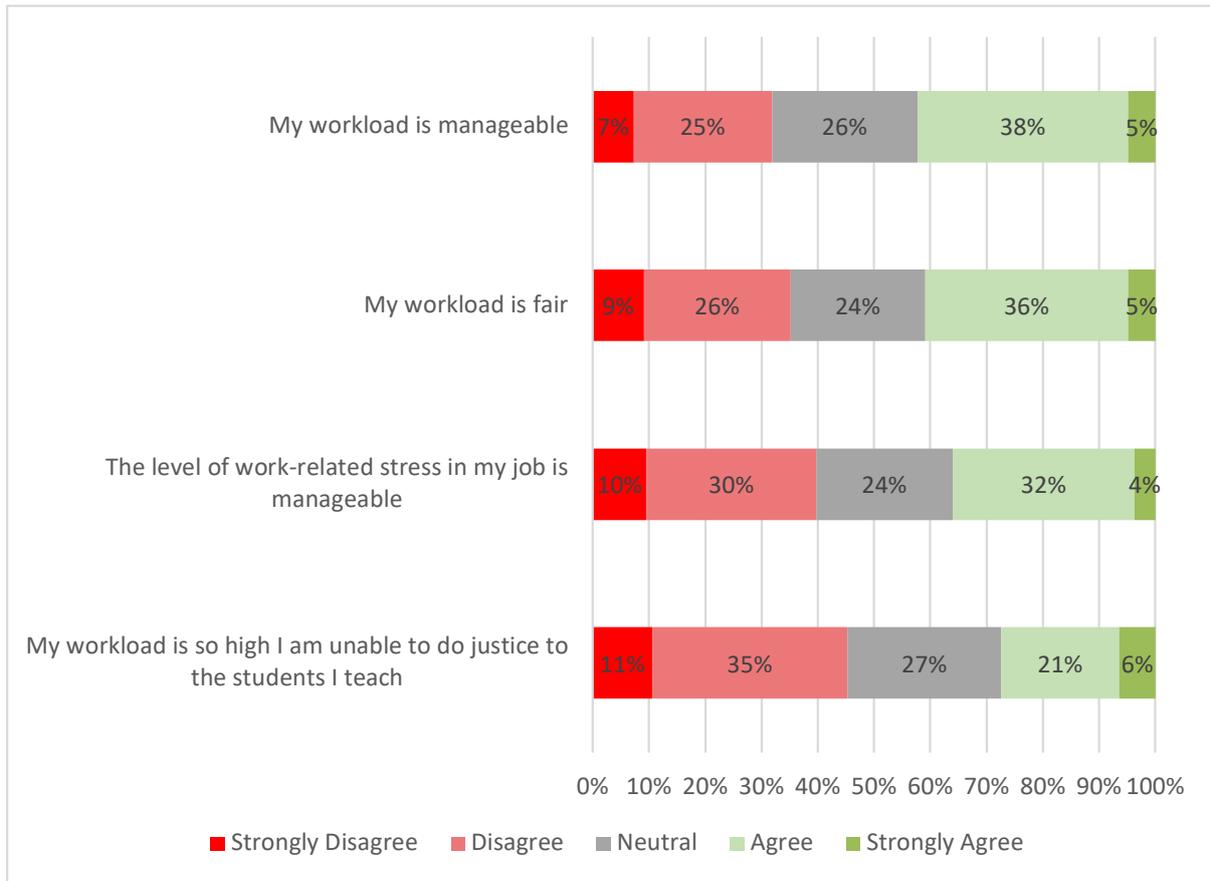
Comparing the 2021 responses with 2018 showed some improvement. In 2021:
- 45% disagreed or disagreed strongly that their workload was so high they were unable to do justice to the students they taught, compared with 39% in 2018
- 42% agreed or strongly agreed their workload was manageable, compared with 31% in 2018
- 41% agreed or strongly agreed their workload was fair, compared with 31% in 2018.

Work hours remain steady

Figure 16 shows 17% of secondary teachers worked 21 hours or more a week outside the times when students are required to be on site. This is much the same as in 2018 and 2015. More teachers indicated working this much in 2012 (26%).

FIGURE 16 **Hours teachers work outside times when students are required to be on site (*n* = 1,043)**
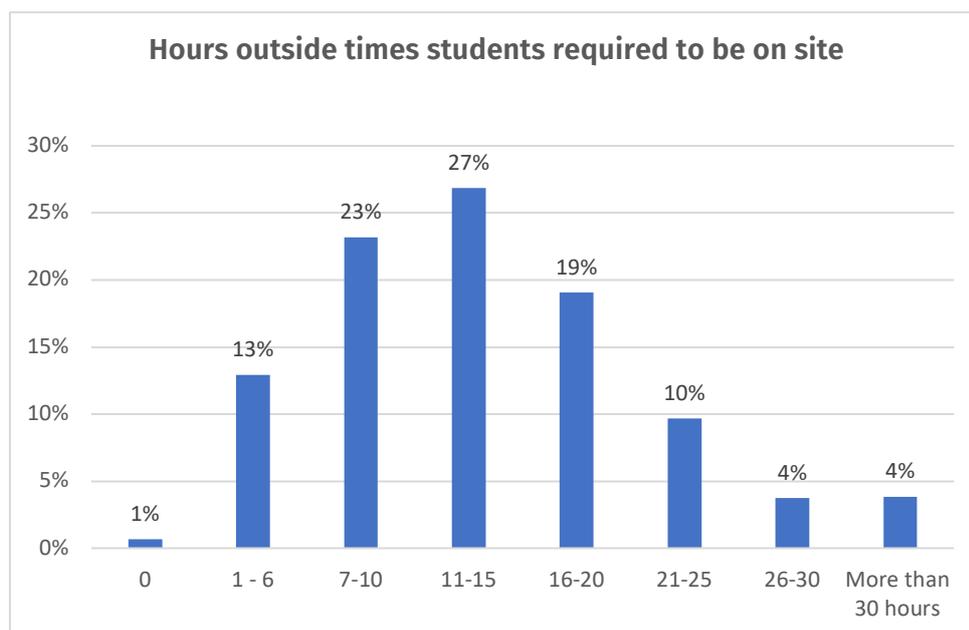
However, morale is down
However, morale is down

Signs of some improvement in teachers' workloads since 2012 do not seem to be matched by their morale levels. Forty-five percent reported their morale as very good or good, and 23% as poor or very poor (see Table 6). The overall picture of morale appears somewhat lower in 2021 than in 2018, 2015, or even 2012, when secondary teachers were grappling with challenges in aligning NCEA with the revised *NZC*.

In 2021, they are starting to grapple with changes to NCEA, with further changes to come with the refresh of *NZC*, amidst the demands and uncertainties associated with COVID-19. Morale levels may reflect periods of substantial change, and, as now, its anticipation, and uncertainty, rather than workload alone. It may also reflect challenges related to student wellbeing and behaviour (see Section 4).

TABLE 6 **Secondary teachers' morale, 2012–2021**

Morale level	2012 (*n* = 1,266) %	2015 (*n* = 1,777) %	2018 (*n* = 707) %	2021 (*n* = 820) %
Very good	21	28	22	13
Good	36	41	40	32
Satisfactory	24	20	23	31
Poor	12	7	11	18
Very poor	2	1	2	5

Changes teachers would make in their work

Almost all the secondary teachers responding would change something about their work (see Table 7). Most of these aspects show steady patterns of desirability since 2012, or some increase in desirability. Better pay is the prime exception, consistent with increases to teacher salaries after the 2018 collective contract negotiations. Reducing assessment workload was also less to the fore.

More sharing of knowledge or ideas with teachers from other schools is one change that has become increasingly sought, as has more support to adapt *NZC* for students with learning support needs, and to teach students with behaviour issues.

Forty-four percent of the secondary teachers responding would like to increase their te reo Māori competency.

TABLE 7 **Changes teachers would make to their work, 2012–2021**

	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %	2018 (n = 705) %	2021 (n = 818) %
Reduce administration/paperwork	63	64	75	64
Reduce number of initiatives at any one time	48	45	55	57
More time to reflect/read/plan*	65	57	62	54
More non-contact time to work with other teachers	46	51	55	53
Reduce class sizes	45	41	53	51
More sharing of knowledge/ideas with teachers from other schools	38	38	43	50
Improve teachers' status in society	*	*	55	49
Better pay	40	60	76	45
More opportunity to increase my te reo Māori competency	-	-	-	44
More support staff	34	29	39	39
Reduce assessment workload	51	46	56	37
More support for me to teach students with behaviour issues	29	22	34	36
Reduce pace of change	38	23	27	32
More appreciation of my work from my school's management	33	27	29	32
More access to PLD	-	-	-	30
More support for me to adapt *NZC* for students with learning support needs	10	11	20	24
More opportunity to connect with whānau	-	-	-	24
Other	4	4	10	20
Nothing	1	1	0	<1

* Item was modified in 2021; formerly it was "More time to reflect/plan/share ideas".

Note: Teachers could give multiple responses.

Overall comments on their work as teachers

Our final question asked for any overall comments to make on their work as teachers. A total of 293 did so.

Some comments reflected teachers' enjoyment and fulfilment:

> I love teaching and sharing my knowledge with students. I can't imagine myself staying away from the school and my students value me and always share their thoughts with me. They love to come to my classes as we have a good bond. I believe students are our future and to nurture them effectively is our job.

> The work–life balance is not always perfect, but this is such a fulfilling and meaningful career at its core. I am fortunate to be at a school that values staff wellbeing—but I have certainly heard horror stories from other institutions.

The general gist of teacher comments was two-sided. On the one hand, they often expressed a love of teaching, enjoyment, and belief in the value of their work. On the other hand, they often described the cost of their work in terms of its demands for their own time, and their feeling that their efficacy as teachers was undercut by growing demands, over-emphasis on assessment, and insufficient support, whether from school management or the wider educational system:

> I love it, but I would like more time to do justice to the changes we are being required to make.

> Teaching is an amazing profession. We just need more support. I don't want to leave education and we need this to be a more sustainable profession.

> I have been a teacher for over 20 years, and I had always loved it. I am finding a deep sense of dissatisfaction right now. Not sure if it's COVID-related or not. It might be my time to move into another field. The system feels broken and even though I love my students and being with them, I can't get beyond my disillusionment that the system has not changed much since I began teaching. The same groups are still being under-served and it breaks my heart. Additionally, I can't see a space for myself and my expertise as a leader. (What happens if you are an expert coach/PL leader, but you don't want to be a senior leader and you have gone as far as you can?)

> I love the kids and have always loved that aspect of the job. Unfortunately, teaching has become all assessment driven and huge amounts of marking and administration, and this has impacted the actual teaching and planning part, the important part of the job.

> It can be incredibly rewarding and unfortunately very inconsistent via a lack of support networks, outside agencies, positive interactions with mental health services along with negative interactions, lack of resources, and adaptation for students who do not fit the 'norm' expectations of schooling and experiencing success.

> I have enjoyed teaching, but I am not getting the satisfaction from the job that I used to. There are increasing levels of social anxiety among students which is hard to manage in a classroom situation.

Teachers' career plans are much the same over the past decade—with two exceptions

Table 8 shows much continuity in the national picture of teachers' career plans over the past decade. There is some increase since 2015 in those thinking of retraining or changing to a career outside education, and in those who are thinking of options other than those we asked about.

TABLE 8   **Secondary teachers' career plans for the next 5 years, 2012–2021**

Career plans	2012 (*n* = 1,266) %	2015 (*n* = 1,777) %	2018 (*n* = 705) %	2021 (*n* = 816) %
Continue as I am now	33	37	40	39
Build my leadership skills	*	*	22	24
Change schools	18	14	14	18
Begin or complete a postgraduate qualification	16	15	14	14
Take on leadership role with management units	*	*	12	15
Retrain/change to a career outside education	10	8	14	14
Take on middle management role	*	*	10	13
Other	2	2	9	11
Retire	13	14	16	15
Change careers within education	10	9	10	11
Take on senior management role	*	*	15	8
Not sure	6	7	4	8
Apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship	23	21	16	18
Leave teaching for personal reasons (e.g., travel, family)	5	9	9	5
Increase level of responsibility within teaching (e.g., SCT, Kāhui Ako role)	*	*	*	11

* Not asked.

Note: Teachers could give multiple responses.

Nine percent of teachers are interested in becoming a principal

Interest in becoming a principal (9%) is much the same proportion as in 2018 and 2015. However, it is much lower than the 19% who were interested in 2012. Another 13% were unsure whether they were interested.

Teacher demographics and school characteristics

TABLE A1 **Teachers' curriculum learning areas (*n* = 1,093)**

Curriculum learning area(s)	*n*	%
English	209	19
Science	203	19
Social science	202	18
Other	199	18
Mathematics	180	16
Technology	150	14
The Arts	126	12
Physical education and health	87	8
Languages	40	4
Te reo Māori	31	3
Not teaching	18	2

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as some teachers teach more than one curriculum learning area.

TABLE A2 **Student year level(s) taught (*n* = 1,029)**

Year level(s) taught	*n*	%
Year 7	121	12
Year 8	121	12
Year 9	690	67
Year 10	724	70
Year 11	693	67
Year 12	706	69
Year 13	636	62
Did not indicate/Not teaching	74	7

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as most secondary teachers cover several year levels.

TABLE A3 **Years of teaching experience (*n* = 1,041)**

Years of teaching experience	*n*	%
1st year teaching	27	3
2nd year teaching	29	3
3–5 years	101	10
6–10 years	158	15
11–15 years	155	15
More than 15 years	571	55

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE A4 **Teachers' gender**

Gender (*n* = 812)	*n*	%
Female	528	65
Male	277	34
Another gender	7	1

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE A5 **Teachers' ethnicity**

Ethnicity (*n* = 812)	*n*	%
NZ European/Pākehā	648	80
Māori	83	10
Other European	55	7
Asian (14 Indian, 13 Chinese, 2 Filipino, 2 Japanese, 2 Korean, 1 Maldivian, 1 Sri Lankan, 5 Other Asian)	40	5
Pacific (10 Samoan, 6 Tongan, 4 Fijian, 3 Cook Island Māori, 1 Niuean, 1 Tahitian, 1 Tokelauan)	26	3
Other	39	5

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple selection.

TABLE A6 **School decile of teachers responding, compared with all secondary teachers and the sample of PPTA members approached to take part**

Decile	All secondary teachers % (*n* = 28,779)	PPTA members in the sample % (*n* = 2,688)	National survey respondents % (*n* = 1,093)
1	7	7	6
2	6	8	8
3	9	8	8
4	10	9	10
5	8	8	8
6	13	14	14
7	13	13	12
8	12	12	14
9	13	12	11
10	8	9	9

Note: 2020 data from Education Counts was used to give the national picture, excluding teachers in schools with 'not applicable' in the decile data. Estimates exclude principals and cluster managers RTLB.

TABLE A7 **Breakdown of teacher respondents by area (urban/rural)**

Area (urban/rural) (*n* = 1,093)	%
Main urban area	73
Minor urban area	15
Secondary urban area	8
Rural area	3

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Note 2: Our sample is representative of all secondary teachers by area.

TABLE A8 **Breakdown of teacher respondents by region**

Region (*n* = 1,093)	%
Auckland region	25
Wellington region	15
Canterbury region	12
Waikato region	10
Bay of Plenty region	7
Manawatu–Wanganui region	6
Northland region	6
Otago region	5
Hawke's Bay region	4
Taranaki region	3
Southland region	2
Nelson region	1
Gisborne region	1
Marlborough region	1
Tasman region	1
West Coast region	1

Note: Our sample is representative of all secondary teachers by region, except for slight under-representation of Auckland teachers (by 5%) and slight over-representation of Wellington teachers (by 3%).

TABLE A9 **Breakdown of teacher respondents by school's co-ed status**

Co-ed status (n = 1,093)	%
Co-educational	75
Single sex (girls' school)	15
Single sex (boys' school)	10

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE A10 **Breakdown of teacher respondents by school type**

School type (*n* = 1,093)	%
Secondary (Years 9–15)	77
Secondary (Years 7–15)	21
Secondary (Years 7–10)	1
Secondary (Years 11–15)	1

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