



# Secondary schools in 2015

Findings from the NZCER national survey

Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne

 **NZCER**  
Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa

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MAY 2016

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New Zealand

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# 1.

# Introduction

**This report presents the main findings from NZCER's latest survey of secondary schools, conducted in July and August 2015. We have done these surveys every 3 years since 2003. They provide a comprehensive national picture of what is happening in our secondary schools, how things have changed over time and the impact of policy changes.**

These national surveys are part of NZCER's Government Grant funded through the Ministry of Education. We get strong support from sector groups who encourage their members to fill out the surveys, and the Ministry of Education and the sector groups also give us very useful feedback on our draft surveys.

The NZCER National Secondary Survey goes to the principal, to the board of trustees chair and one other trustee (we asked the board chair to give the survey to someone whose opinion might differ from their own) and to a random sample of one in four teachers at all 313 state and state-integrated secondary schools in New Zealand; and to a random sample of one in four parents at a cross-section of 32 of these schools. Details on the sampling, margin of error and survey methodology are in Appendix 1.

In this report, we discuss statistically significant differences in responses related to school decile, location and size.

Decile showed the most association with difference. One common thread through the different sections of this report are differences associated with school decile, showing that decile 1–2 schools face the deepest challenges in meeting their students' needs. We grouped the schools into decile bands for analysis purposes: decile 1–2, decile 3–4, decile 5–6, decile 7–8 and decile 9–10.

We use the phrase “changes with decile” to signify distinct decile-related differences, although occasionally there is some overlap between decile bands. Similarly, we describe the data as “increasing to” to signify graduated increases from one point to another. We occasionally report larger groupings, such as deciles 5–10, where there is consistency across a larger grouping of deciles.

This overview report covers key aspects of secondary school experiences and perspectives.

## Some key findings

### Transition to secondary school

Most secondary schools had deliberate strategies to build their Years 9 and 10 students' sense of belonging in their school, but less than half thought they had good information about their incoming students' strengths and needs. The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was playing an increasing part in Years 9 and 10 classes, with 40% of teachers giving practice exams.

### Learning to learn and the key competencies

We found that little progress had been made since 2012 in equipping students with the ability to *learn to learn*—a key principle in *The New Zealand curriculum* (NZC)<sup>1</sup>—and in inclusion of the key competencies in students' learning opportunities. Heavy workloads, lack of time for collaborative curriculum planning and NCEA were the main barriers to teachers making changes to what they taught.

### NCEA

Support for NCEA was stable, perceptions about its credibility in the wider community had continued to improve and recognition that NCEA can help with inclusion had increased. Schools were paying more attention to students' pathways choices and looking to NCEA's flexibility to help design courses that meet most students' needs. However, half the teachers thought that NCEA pressures impacted negatively on student wellbeing, and the NCEA workload for teachers was cited by more than half of principals and teachers as a major issue facing their school.

### Learning with digital technology

Government provision to strengthen schools' digital technology infrastructure in the past few years had a positive impact, with improvements in its adequacy and Internet access. However, this is not yet universal, with decile 1–2 schools having less adequate access. Teachers and principals were generally positive about the gains for students' learning with digital technology. Teachers' comments showed also that they wanted more professional learning and time to practise and experiment with digital technology to make the best use of it in their classes. The reported uptake of online opportunities for student participation in distance learning or e-learning was relatively low.

Most schools (62%) had bring your own device (BYOD) policies, with more than half the schools relying on parent provision of digital devices. Students in low-decile schools had more restricted access to digital technology for learning and usually worked with school-owned devices, making these students less digitally connected. Parents' and whānau electronic access to school information about their child increased with school decile, resulting in unequal use of this information source.

### Student wellbeing

Overall, there was some evidence of improvement since 2012 in the way secondary schools are supporting students' wellbeing. Most teachers reported teaching their students strategies to manage their social and emotional wellbeing.

Student behaviour was much less of an issue in 2015 than it had been in 2009, and fewer teachers had their teaching often seriously disrupted, or felt unsafe in their classroom or school. Student behaviour continued to be an issue for teachers in decile 1–2 schools. Overall, this indicates some gains from the Ministry's support for schools through the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) strategy.

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1 Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

However, secondary schools continued to have difficulty accessing mental health support for their students, and Child, Youth and Family (CYF) support and wraparound support for individual students with complex and challenging needs.

### **Teachers' role**

Teachers were generally feeling more positive about their work than in 2012, when the alignment of NCEA and NZC was at its most demanding. Morale and enjoyment levels had lifted, and workload manageability showed some improvement, back to 2009 levels. School-based professional learning opportunities had also improved. Teachers continued to want more time to work together, reduce their administration and paperwork and their assessment workload.

### **The principal role**

Secondary principals' morale and optimism levels had slipped since 2012. While they generally enjoyed their role, work hours and stress levels remained high. Only 30% felt they could schedule enough time for the educational leadership part of their role. Just over half would like more career options beyond the principal role—these are limited in the New Zealand system, unlike many others. Thirty percent of the secondary schools had been led by three or more principals in the past 10 years. Schools with more stable school leadership were more likely to improve their Education Review Office (ERO) report status. New principals were more likely to be heading schools in the most challenging situations. Support for ongoing principal development including useful annual performance reviews had not improved since 2012.

### **Trustee perspectives**

Secondary school trustees, parents and principals all identified the provision of strategic direction for the school as the main key element in the school board role, followed by supporting school staff and the principal. Employment of the principal did not feature highly. Most trustees thought the responsibility asked of them was about right, though 29% of board chairs thought it was too much; a third of the board chairs gave at least 6 hours a week to their role.

Most trustees and principals were positive about how their board was doing, and about the relationships between the board chair and the principal. However, around a third of the principals saw their board as needing a lot of support from the school staff.

Twenty percent of the trustees said their board had all the expertise it needed. Experience or skills that were lacking ranged widely, again indicating particular local contexts and board composition. More trustees in 2015 than in 2012 mentioned a lack of expertise in strategic planning, community consultation, understanding achievement data, links with local employers and property.

Trustees reported getting internal support and information for their role from the principal and other school staff, and each other. They also used written resources from the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) (89%), the Ministry of Education (57%) and ERO (51%). Most had had some form of professional development for their trustee role over the past year, mainly through NZSTA-provided and largely government-funded workshops and courses, and through their own paid work (41%). Around a third had also had advice from NZSTA, ERO and the regional office of the Ministry of Education. Almost all who had had some external professional development or advice for their role saw a positive impact in terms of understanding their responsibilities and, for a minority, in terms of important decisions they needed to make.

Many trustees would like to improve their effectiveness, and the main changes they sought were for more guidance and support on matters beyond NZSTA's role, and a better match of time and expectations to what they can achieve.

## Parent and whānau perspectives

Most parents and whānau were generally happy with the quality of their child's secondary schooling, and positive about their children's teachers and what their child was gaining from their learning. All but 7% of their children were attending their first choice of secondary school. When parents and whānau chose a school for their youngest child they were more likely to take into account the child's preference, the school's links with family members and whether their child's friends were also going to that school, than to weigh up information about the school's academic track record or the programmes they offered, or use ERO reports, the school's annual report or the Find a School website.

Getting a qualification, preparing for their career or work life and tertiary study topped the list of things that were important to parents and whānau for their child's secondary education.

For many Māori whānau it was important that their child learn te reo Māori at school, though not all of these thought their child's school was doing well at helping their child learn te reo Māori.

In the context of schools' greater attention to tracking students' learning information, more parents thought they were getting good information from the school about their child's progress (74%, compared with 63% in 2012 and 53% in 2009). The proportion of parents who thought the school genuinely consulted them about new directions or issues had increased steadily since 2009 (47% in 2015, 41% in 2012 and 34% of parents in 2009).

Parents were using fewer sources than in 2012 to get education-related information. Friends and other parents, as well as newspapers, tended to be their preferred information sources in 2015. There was a decrease in parents' use of ERO as a source of information about their school and about education in general.

Parental involvement in their child's school increased, particularly in attending sports, and also in attending school performances, going on school trips and fundraising.

One common thread through the different sections of this report are differences associated with school decile, showing that decile 1–2 schools face the deepest challenges in meeting their students' needs.

## Resources and support

Only 14% of secondary principals thought their school's government funding was sufficient for their school's needs. However, in 2015 secondary schools appeared to be more successful than previously in keeping their school finances stable, managing their budgets through reducing school spending and relying on non-government funding sources, such as international students, and parental provision of digital devices.

Just under a quarter of principals thought their school's staffing entitlement was enough, with 76% using locally raised funds to hire additional staff. Finding suitable teachers to fill their school's vacancies was a difficulty experienced by 71%, with 31% having difficulty finding te reo Māori teachers. Middle management positions had been hard to fill at 55% of the schools, largely due to workload.

Decile 9–10 schools were in the most stable situation and decile 1–2 schools generally in the most challenging situation with regard to funding, staffing and competing for students. Competition for students appears to have sharpened.

## Support and challenge

There were some strengths evident in the support and challenge schools got from government agencies, particularly ERO and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Interactions with the restructured regional Ministry of Education offices were largely positive by mid-2015. The picture was more varied



when it came to the Ministry of Education national office (responsible for funding and property as well as policy) and the then Teachers' Council (now the Education Council).

Some real gains have been made in secondary schools' access to needed external expertise. However, there are some areas that continue to present problems for minorities of secondary schools, indicating needs that cannot be met by asking schools to source their own advice.

### **Communities of Learning**

Communities of Schools (CoS) (now Communities of Learning (CoL)) were just starting to form in mid-2015. Sixty-five percent of principals were interested in their school joining a CoL, and around a quarter of teachers expressed interest in the new within-school or across-CoS roles. Teachers' views of the new roles included positive views of the purpose of CoLs, but also some scepticism about the ability of CoLs to meet their purpose, and concerns about negative impacts for teachers or schools. Principals' expectations of CoLs were highest in relation to the sharing of useful knowledge for teaching and learning, with just over half thinking the CoLs would bring more traction on tackling issues around student achievement and engagement, and a minority expecting more sharing of resources and access to support. Principals saw somewhat more drawbacks than benefits from working in CoLs.

### **Issues facing secondary schools**

Foremost for principals and teachers in the issues facing their schools was the weight of assessment, and associated with that for teachers, motivating students. Resources were the two prime concerns for trustees: property and funding. Parents were concerned that their school can provide good curriculum options, attract and keep good teachers and about student behaviour. While the adequacy of digital technology and Internet access was less of a concern than in 2012, dealing with the inappropriate use of technology was a shared concern across all four groups in 2015.

## 2.

# Supporting students' learning

**We focus in this chapter on two key aspects of secondary student learning: how schools support students to make a good transition to secondary school, and the broad shape that the early years of secondary school take. Then we look at how secondary schools are weaving the NZC key competencies through student learning.**

Are teachers doing this in a way that supports students' ability to learn independently and gain the "soft skills" that are as essential to adult success as content knowledge? Teachers' reports of student opportunities for developing and using these aspects of competency are followed by parents' and whānau views of how well their child's school is helping them develop in these areas.

The two main variables associated with differences in supporting students' learning were teachers' subject group and school decile, with a smaller number of differences associated with school size.

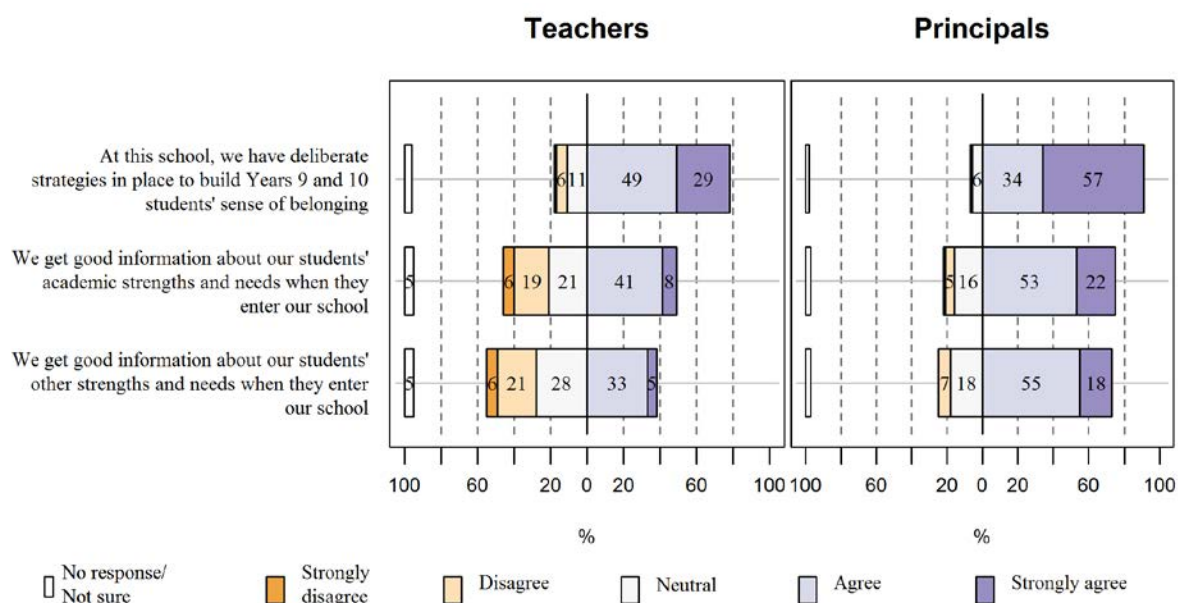
### Laying the foundations in Years 9 and 10

Most secondary schools had deliberate strategies in place for building Years 9 and 10 students' sense of belonging.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 shows mixed views about the quality of information secondary schools got about their entering students, with teachers less sanguine about this than principals. Around three-quarters of principals thought that their school received good information about students' strengths and needs, compared with less than half the teachers.

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2 For more about approaches schools were taking to support students' sense of belonging, see *Chapter 5: Supporting students' wellbeing*.

FIGURE 1 Transition at Years 9 and 10; teachers' (n = 1,777) and principals' (n = 182) views



Teachers' views about the information they received changed with school decile. Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were the least likely to agree with these items. For example, 36% of teachers in decile 1–2 schools agreed that *We get good information about our students' academic strengths and needs when they enter our school*, increasing to 58% for teachers from decile 7 and 8 schools, then dropping back to 50% for teachers from decile 9–10 schools. A similar association was evident between school decile and principals' views.

School size was also associated with teachers' responses to the items in Figure 1, with more teachers agreeing/strongly agreeing, as school size increased.

Teachers in the subject group Technology, Health and PE, Transition, Careers and Special education were more likely than those teaching other subjects to agree the school has deliberate strategies for building these students' sense of belonging (84%). Teachers of English and Languages and teachers of Mathematics and Science were slightly less likely than those teaching other subjects to agree that they got good information about students' academic strengths (46% and 47% respectively, compared with 52% for other subjects).

We cannot tell from the responses to the items about student information whether secondary teachers were not receiving information, or if they did not consider what they receive to be "good information". Either way, it is difficult to see how students' learning can follow on from their previous learning—the "connected and continuous" curriculum described in ERO's (2012a) national report on transitions from primary to secondary school<sup>3</sup>—when less than half of secondary teachers reported receiving good information related to students' previous learning. Not much seems to have changed since then.

In their (2012b) report,<sup>4</sup> ERO identified that some leaders in secondary schools felt the information that came from contributing schools "was not reliable, current, or did not cover the domains that they wished

3 Education Review Office. (2012a). *Evaluation at a glance: Transitions from primary to secondary school*. Retrieved 11 December 2015, from <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Evaluation-at-a-Glance-Transitions-from-Primary-to-Secondary-School-December-2012>

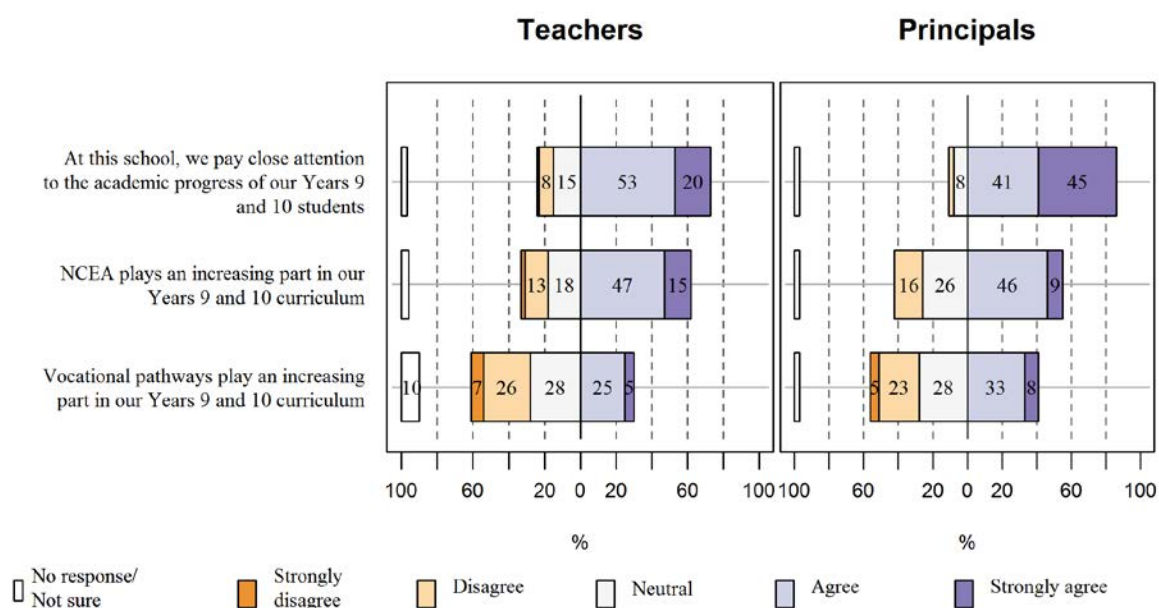
4 Education Review Office. (2012b). *Literacy and mathematics in years 9 and 10: Using achievement information to promote success*. Retrieved 11 December 2015, from <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Literacy-and-Mathematics-in-Years-9-and-10-Using-Achievement-Information-to-Promote-Success-July-2012>

to know about” (p. 13). A similar perspective might account for teachers’ responses here. A possible effect of teachers and school leaders not trusting the data they receive (or not considering it “good information”) is that potential learning time is spent re-assessing students, and doing this delays starting instruction at an appropriate level, and may mean repetition of material already covered, or conversely, pitching material at too high a level. This is one of the hopes of the CoLs (see *Chapter 12: Communities of Schools*), that joint work between primary, intermediate and secondary schools will lead to shared understandings about progress in relation to NZC, and what underpins expectations for information about students’ progress and achievement. The building of a shared understanding has the potential to strengthen the sharing of pertinent information that can make teaching more effective.

### Students’ progress and curriculum at Years 9 and 10

The majority of teachers and principals said they paid close attention to the progress of Years 9 and 10 students (see Figures 2 and 3).<sup>5</sup> Views of student progress were likely to reflect both NZC and NCEA, which was playing an increasing part in the Years 9 and 10 curriculum. A significant minority of teachers said that students undertake NCEA practice exams. Many—but not all—teachers thought they had a clear picture of the progress students in the first 2 years of secondary school should be making in terms of NZC. Vocational pathways<sup>6</sup> were also playing an increasing role in the Years 9 and 10 curriculum for around a third.

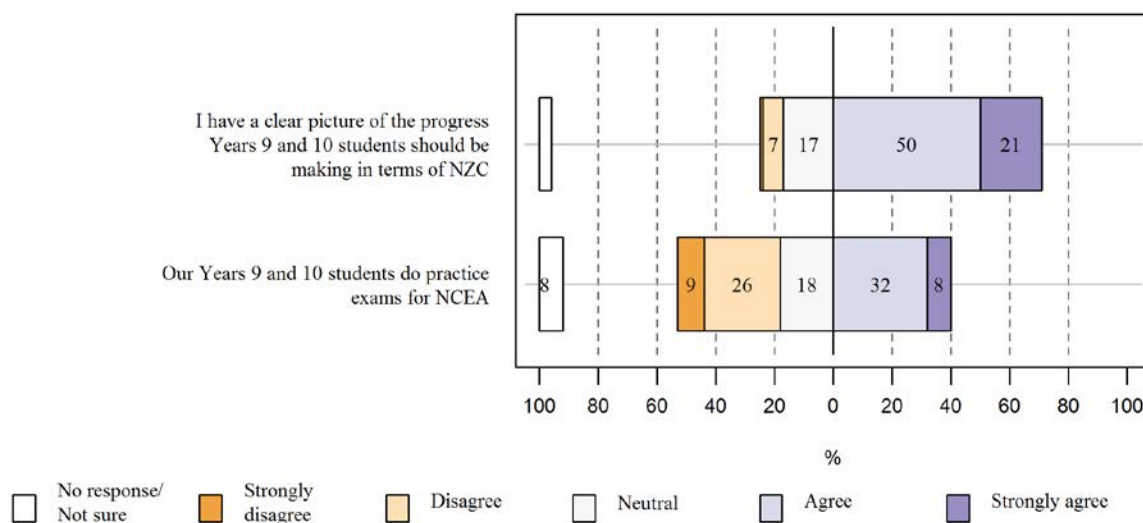
FIGURE 2 Years 9 and 10 students’ learning pathways; teachers’ (n = 1,777) and principals’ (n = 182) views



5 We asked these questions for the first time in 2015.

6 For more on vocational pathways, see *Chapter 3: Working with NCEA*.

FIGURE 3 NZC and NCEA at Years 9 and 10; teachers' views (n = 1,777)



Somewhat fewer teachers at small schools paid close attention to the academic progress of their Years 9 and 10 students (65%, compared with 73% of those at large schools). As well, 61% of teachers at small schools said they had a clear picture of the progress Years 9 and 10 students should be making in terms of NZC, increasing to 73% of teachers at large schools.

Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were more likely than those at decile 9–10 schools to say that vocational pathways played an increasing part in their Years 9 and 10 curriculum (33% for decile 1–2, compared with 21% for decile 9–10).

Also associated with teachers' response patterns were their subject groups: 75% of teachers of English and Languages, and Mathematics and Science said they knew what progress students should be making in terms of NZC, compared with 68% of teachers of other subjects. Teachers' responses to this item were associated with *neither* school decile *nor* the teachers' role in the school (e.g., AP/DP,<sup>7</sup> HoD,<sup>8</sup> form teacher, class/subject teacher).

## Key competency learning experiences for students

*The New Zealand Curriculum*<sup>9</sup> identifies five key competencies that schools should deliberately cultivate in their students:

- *thinking*
- *relating to others*
- *using language, symbols, and texts*
- *managing self*
- *participating and contributing.*

Teachers are expected to support the development of students' key competencies as an *integral* part of the learning they plan. Certain types of learning experiences are more likely to fulfil such expectations than others. With this in mind, over several survey rounds we have used succinct descriptors of possible

7 Assistant principal/deputy principal.

8 Head of department.

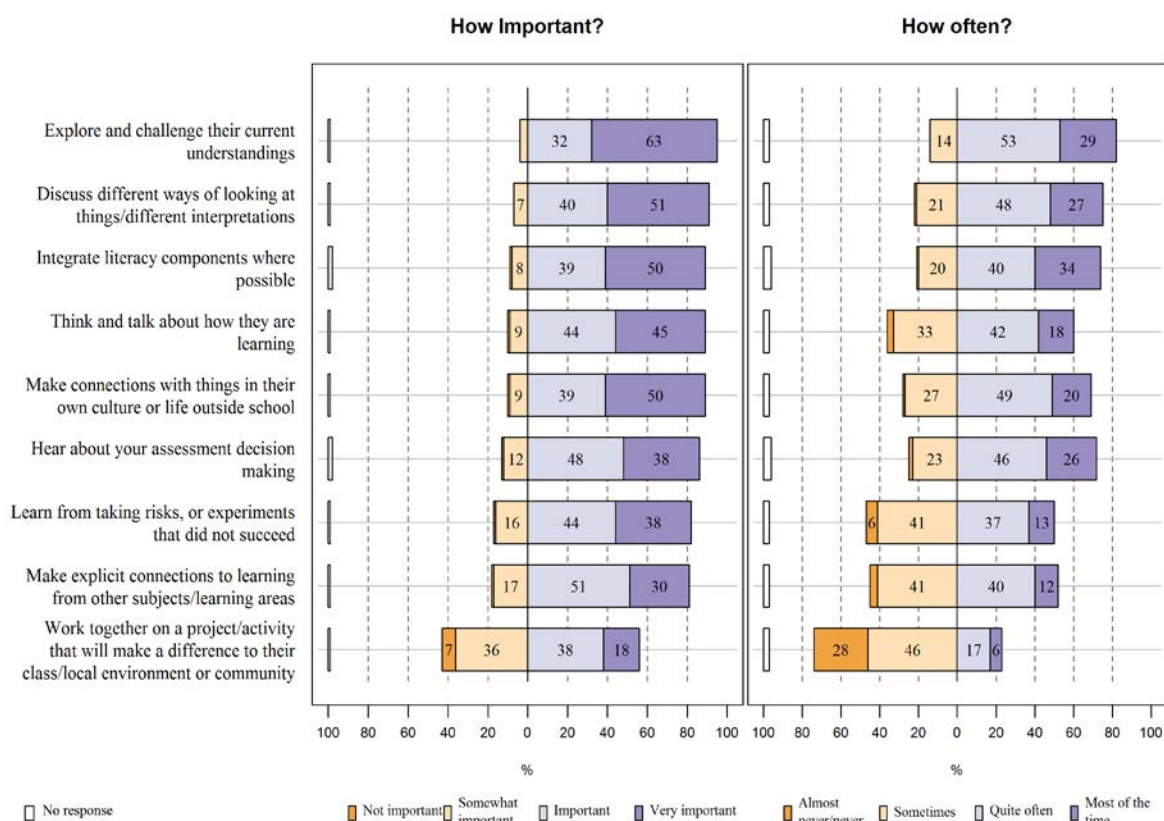
9 See <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum>

rich learning experiences as a proxy for the intention to weave key competencies into the learning programme. The figure on the next page shows these descriptions.

We sought teachers' views about the importance of each type of learning experience, and how often they thought students could take part in such experiences in their classes. Figure 4 shows that, generally, teachers thought the experiences we asked about were important, with half or more reporting that they occurred quite often or most of the time in their classes.

The learning experience that received the lowest ratings for both importance and frequency was “work together on a project/activity that will make a difference to their class/local environment or community”. In *Chapter 5: Supporting students' wellbeing*, we highlight the importance of building students' sense of belonging as a protective factor for their wellbeing. This type of learning experience has the potential to contribute to students' wellbeing, but 28% of the teachers reported they were almost never/never provided this experience for their classes.

FIGURE 4 Importance and frequency of learning experiences, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)



School decile-related differences were evident in teachers' perceptions of the importance of some of these learning experiences. Higher proportions of teachers in decile 1–2 schools rated as very important their students having learning experiences that provided opportunities to:

- make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school (65%, decreasing to 45% for teachers at decile 9–10 schools)
- integrate literacy components where possible (61%, decreasing to 47%)
- think and talk about how they are learning (54%, decreasing to 42%).



When it came to how frequently teachers' classes do these things, there was only one school decile-related difference. Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were less likely to indicate their students almost never/never worked together on a project/activity that would make a difference to their class or community (14%, increasing to 31% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools).

Subjects taught were not related to teachers' views of the importance nor how often they included such experiences in their classes.

## The role of metatalk

The provision of opportunities for all students to develop key competencies has been of ongoing interest in the national survey. In an analysis of teachers' responses to the 2012 secondary survey, Hipkins (2015)<sup>10</sup> identified a particular set of items related to learning experiences that can support development of key competencies, which formed a factor. This factor raised a question about what the group of items might have in common. Looking across these items, what stood out was the potential need for a certain type of "metatalk". Metatalk is "talk a teacher uses in order to direct students' attention to specific aspects of the learning action as it is unfolding, and as the teacher wishes it to proceed" (p. viii). However, certain types of metatalk target the act of learning per se, pointing out the meaning-making challenges and/or the bigger picture and longer-term outcomes the teacher is hoping to foster.

The seven items included in Table 1 are the learning experiences that comprised the metatalk factor Hipkins identified in teachers' 2012 responses. Small increases in views of the importance of these learning experiences were evident from 2012 to 2015 for four of the items, with small decreases in the other three items; overall indicating little change in teachers seeing these items as very important (and presumably hoping to include them in their teaching).

TABLE 1 Learning experiences teachers rated as *Very important*; 2012 and 2015<sup>11</sup>

Learning experiences ( <i>Very important</i> )	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %
Explore and challenge their current understandings	59	63
Discuss different ways of looking at things/different interpretations	47	52
Make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school	56	50
Integrate literacy components where possible	45	50
Think and talk about how they are learning	48	45
Hear about your assessment decision-making	35	38
Make explicit connections to learning from other subjects/learning areas	32	30

The frequency with which teachers provided these learning experiences also showed little change from 2012 (see Table 2), with the exception of an increase in opportunities to integrate literacy components where possible, most of the time (up to 34% from 26% in 2012). For the other learning experiences, there was little change since 2012 in the proportion of teachers who provided these for their classes most of the time.

10 Hipkins, R. (2015). Learning to learn in secondary classrooms. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

11 Although similar items were included in the teacher survey in 2009, a different scale was used for the importance teachers placed on these learning experiences, so direct comparison is not possible. Items about how frequently teachers provided these learning experiences used the same scale, allowing comparisons to be made.



TABLE 2 Learning experiences teachers reported their classes doing *Most of the time*; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Learning experiences ( <i>Most of the time</i> )	2009 (n = 871) %	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %
Integrate literacy components where possible	24	26	34
Explore and challenge their current understandings	19	29	29
Discuss different ways of looking at things/different interpretations	14	28	27
Hear about your assessment decision-making	*	27	26
Make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school	23	23	20
Think and talk about how they are learning	14	18	18
Make explicit connections to learning from other subjects/learning areas	*	13	12

\*Not asked

In the 2012 teacher responses there were some differences associated with teachers' subject group for four of these items. These differences remained in 2015, as we can see in Table 3.

English and Languages teachers were more likely to see these learning experiences as very important, with Mathematics and Science teachers least likely to see them as very important. Mathematics and Science teachers also showed the largest decrease between 2012 and 2015 in thinking it very important for students to make connections with things in their own culture or life in their classes.

 TABLE 3 Differences in learning experiences teachers rated as *Very important*, according to subject groupings, 2015 (and 2012 in parentheses)

Learning experiences ( <i>Very important</i> )	English/ Languages (n = 455) %	Mathematics/ Science (n = 514) %	Social Sciences/ Arts (n = 387) %	Tech/Health & PE/ Transition/ Careers/ Special Ed. (n = 369) %
Integrate literacy components where possible	<b>70</b> (71)	41 (42)	48 (43)	39 (38)
Make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school	<b>66</b> (76)	38 (53)	54 (65)	44 (50)
Discuss different ways of looking at things/ different interpretations	<b>63</b> (61)	40 (41)	58 (59)	46 (44)
Hear about your assessment decision-making	<b>43</b> (48)	31 (34)	39 (37)	39 (36)

Note: The highest proportion in 2015 in each row appears in bold, and the smallest proportion is in italics.

Consistent with these differences in teachers' views of how important these opportunities were, we see the same patterns when it comes to whether students have these opportunities most of the time (see Table 4). One noteworthy decrease between 2012 and 2015 was in the proportion of teachers in the Social Sciences/the Arts/commerce group who most of the time provided their classes with opportunities to make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school (32% in 2012, down to 21% in 2015).

TABLE 4 **Learning experiences teachers reported occurring *Most of the time*, according to type of subject taught, 2015 (and 2012 in parentheses)**

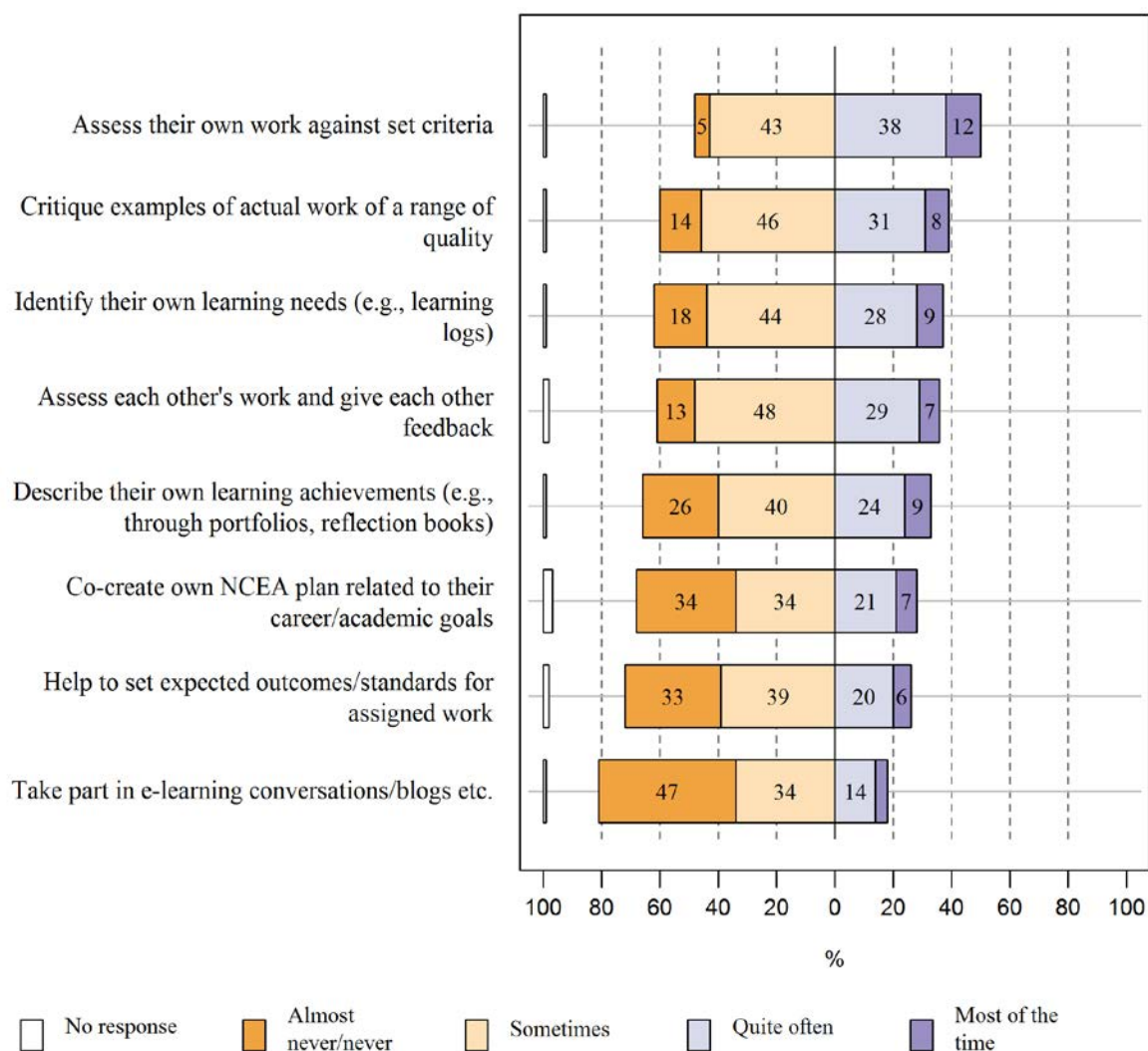
Learning experiences ( <i>Most of the time</i> )	English/ Languages ( <i>n</i> = 455) %	Mathematics/ Science ( <i>n</i> = 514) %	Social Sciences/Arts ( <i>n</i> = 387) %	Tech/Health & PE/ Transition/ Careers/ Special Ed. ( <i>n</i> = 369) %
Integrate literacy components where possible	<b>57</b> (53)	22 (19)	32 (24)	24 (21)
Discuss different ways of looking at things/ different interpretations	<b>37</b> (37)	18 (15)	30 (38)	24 (24)
Make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school	<b>31</b> (40)	11 (13)	21 (32)	18 (25)
Hear about your assessment decision-making	<b>30</b> (36)	20 (22)	27 (25)	26 (26)

Note: The highest proportion in 2015 in each row appears in bold, and the smallest proportion is in italics.

## The contribution of assessment practices to learning to learn

*Learning to learn* is a foundation principle in NZC, and students taking responsibility for their own learning is integral to the key competencies. Doing so can be supported by providing students with opportunities to be involved in assessment processes and goal setting. Figure 5 shows that most teachers reported their students having various experiences to help them learn to take responsibility for their learning, sometimes or more frequently. The most frequent experience—students assessing their own work against set criteria—was reported happening quite often or most of the time by 50% of teachers, slightly down from 54% in 2012.

FIGURE 5 Frequency of experiences that help students learn to take responsibility for their learning, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)



The report of the 2012 survey results<sup>12</sup> suggested that involving students in decisions about their learning was “still on the horizon for many teachers” (p. 25). In 2015, there was evidence of teachers making some small shifts towards that horizon, with changes for two items. Fewer teachers reported that their students never/almost never helped to set expected outcomes/standards for assigned work (47% in 2012, compared with 33% in 2015). Those reporting that students never/almost never co-created their own NCEA plan related to their career/academic goals decreased from 46% in 2012 to 34% in 2015.

Students in low-decile schools had more frequent opportunities in two aspects of taking responsibility for their own learning. Forty-seven percent of teachers in decile 1–2 schools reported students quite often or most of the time help to co-create their own NCEA plan related to their career/academic goals (compared with 27% of teachers in decile 9–10 schools). Thirty-eight percent of teachers in decile 1–2 schools reported students quite often or most of the time helped set expected outcomes/standards for assigned work (compared with 24% for decile 9–10 schools).

12 Wylie, C. (2013). *Secondary schools in 2012: Main findings from the NZCER national survey*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Looking at subject-related differences, Mathematics and Science teachers were consistently the least likely group to report their students quite often or most of the time had opportunities to take responsibility for their learning, particularly to:

- help to set expected outcomes/standards for assigned work (18%, compared with 26% for all teachers)
- describe their own learning achievements (20%, compared with 33%)
- critique examples of actual work of a range of quality (23%, compared with 39%)
- assess each other's work and give each other feedback (25%, compared with 37%).

### What are the barriers to teachers making changes?

Having too heavy a workload headed the set of barriers identified by teachers to their making changes to or maintaining the quality of the curriculum they teach. Seventy-seven percent of teachers identified at least one barrier. Of these teachers, more than 25% identified the following barriers:

- workload too heavy (58% of teachers who selected barriers)
- lack of time for collaborative curriculum planning (50%)
- time taken for NCEA assessments (47%)
- NCEA requirements (43%)
- classes are too big (37%)
- lack of money (37%)
- student behaviour (35%)
- classes are too diverse (29%)
- practical difficulties taking students into the community (29%).

In 2015, teacher responses to this list of barriers fell between those of 2009 and 2012, once again pointing to the impact for teachers of the realignment of NCEA with NZC, discussed in the next chapter. For example, in 2009, 38% of teachers indicated NCEA requirements were a barrier to making changes. This rose to 57% in 2012, then dropped back to 43% in 2015. Time taken for NCEA assessments was a barrier for 30% of teachers in 2009, 52% in 2012 and 47% in the latest survey.

In their open responses at the end of the survey, 11% of teachers' comments related to assessment concerns:

Teaching is NCEA driven, giving teachers no input into what we do. Assessments (NCEA externals) define what we do and limit pedagogical development. NCEA internals massively increase our workload.

Workloads are increasing, I feel less confident that internal assessments (NCEA) are a true reflection of competency. Assessment and gathering of credits is leading education.

NCEA is assessment driven—this sometimes takes the joy out of learning. The level of internal assessment has increased dramatically—this has affected wellbeing of students. Workload has increased due to internal assessments increasing.

The barriers teachers identified varied according to school decile and size, and the subjects teachers taught. For greater proportions of teachers in decile 1–2 schools, barriers to making changes to, or maintaining, the quality of the curriculum they teach were related to students and resources:

- student behaviour (56%, decreasing to 13% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools)
- lack of money (48%, decreasing to 22% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools)
- practical difficulties in taking students into the community (38%, compared with 26% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools)
- classes being too diverse (36%, decreasing to 17% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools).

For greater proportions of teachers in decile 9–10 schools, barriers tended to relate to NCEA and, for a few, the community's expectations:

- time taken for NCEA assessments (55%, decreasing to 39% for teachers in decile 1–2 schools)
- NCEA requirements (47%, compared with 34% for teachers in decile 1–2 schools)
- parents' expectations (12%, decreasing to 5% for teachers in decile 1–2 schools).

School size made a difference in some cases. Teachers at large schools were more likely to indicate barriers to maintaining a quality curriculum were:

- workload too heavy (61%, decreasing to 44% of teachers in small schools)
- NCEA requirements (48%, compared with 25% of teachers in small schools)
- classes are too big (45%, decreasing to 9% for teachers in small and small–medium schools).

Differences associated with subject group were evident in the role of NCEA as a barrier to making changes to, or maintaining, the quality of the curriculum being taught. Mathematics and Science teachers were more likely to identify NCEA requirements (51%) and time taken for NCEA assessments (53%) as barriers. In contrast, 37% of teachers of Technology, Health and PE, Transition, Careers and Special Education reported these as barriers.

## Summary and discussion

In Years 9 and 10, the presence of NZC and NCEA were both evident, with a significant minority of teachers reporting students doing practice exams for NCEA. Most, but not all, teachers indicated they have a clear picture of expected progress in terms of NZC for students at these year levels. Three-quarters of teachers identified barriers to making changes or maintaining the quality of the curriculum they teach, with their workload being too heavy topping the list.

There has been little change since 2012 in how teachers are incorporating the key competencies in students' learning experiences, how they viewed the importance of metatalk opportunities and how often they provided these for their classes. The 2015 data largely replicate the subject group differences that emerged in 2012: teachers of English and Languages were most likely to provide their classes with metatalk opportunities, and teachers of Mathematics and Science were the least likely.

The flow of useful student information between primary and intermediate schools and secondary schools was working well for a minority of teachers; less than half the teachers agreed they get good information from contributing schools about their new students' strengths and needs. The reasons that underpin these responses warrant further investigation.

School decile-related differences were also evident. Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were least likely to report receiving good information about new students from the previous schools. In decile 1–2 schools, teachers found maintaining curriculum quality was hampered by inadequate funding and needing to focus on students' behaviour. The barriers for teachers in decile 9–10 schools were different; for them, NCEA demands proved to be a barrier to making change. Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were more likely than those in decile 9–10 schools to provide their classes with opportunities to work together on projects that affect their community and to make connections with things in their culture. They were also more likely to involve students in decisions about learning pathways.

Why has NCEA come to so dominate when NZC has such clear messages of its own about what students should be learning and why? We turn now to the NCEA itself to address that and other issues to do with the qualification system in the senior secondary school.

### 3.

## Working with NCEA<sup>13</sup>

**The current senior secondary assessment system, NCEA,<sup>14</sup> began to be implemented in 2002. The first national survey of secondary schools was conducted in 2003. This serendipitous timing has enabled us to track principal, teacher, trustee, and parent and whānau views about the qualification from NCEA's turbulent inception to the present day. Many of the items included in the very first survey were superseded in the second because issues and practices related to NCEA were evolving rapidly during that time. From the 2006 survey on, a more stable core of items has been tracked every 3 years, with additional items added as different developments or challenges have cropped up.**

Detailed analyses of responses from the second, third and fourth surveys were described in a stand-alone series of reports written by Rosemary Hipkins (2007,<sup>15</sup> 2010,<sup>16</sup> 2013<sup>17</sup>). During the consultation process for the 2015 survey, it seemed that NCEA itself no longer appeared to be the “hot topic” it had been. While major changes had taken place in NCEA policy and/or practices between past survey rounds, the period between 2012 and 2015 was seen as being largely a time of consolidation. Thus in this chapter we report on a reduced set of items.

We look first at how supportive principals, teachers, trustees and parents were of NCEA, and whether they saw it as a credible qualification in the wider community. Then we look at the importance of qualifications for parents and whānau, how the Government's programmes to support schools to

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13 This chapter has benefited considerably from contributions from Rosemary Hipkins, co-author of the book: Hipkins, R., Johnston, M., & Sheehan, M. (in press). *NCEA in context*. Wellington: NZCER Press.

14 National Certificate of Educational Achievement.

15 Hipkins, R. (2007). *Taking the pulse of NCEA: Findings from the NZCER national survey of secondary schools 2006*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

16 Hipkins, R. (2010). *The evolving NCEA: Findings from the NZCER national survey of secondary schools 2009*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

17 Hipkins, R. (2013). *NCEA one decade on: Views and experiences from the 2012 NZCER national survey of secondary schools*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

increase NCEA success rates were perceived in schools and how schools were providing different pathways and using NCEA to meet the range of student learning needs. Finally, we look at how NCEA was impacting on teachers' curriculum thinking and workloads, and the impacts for students.

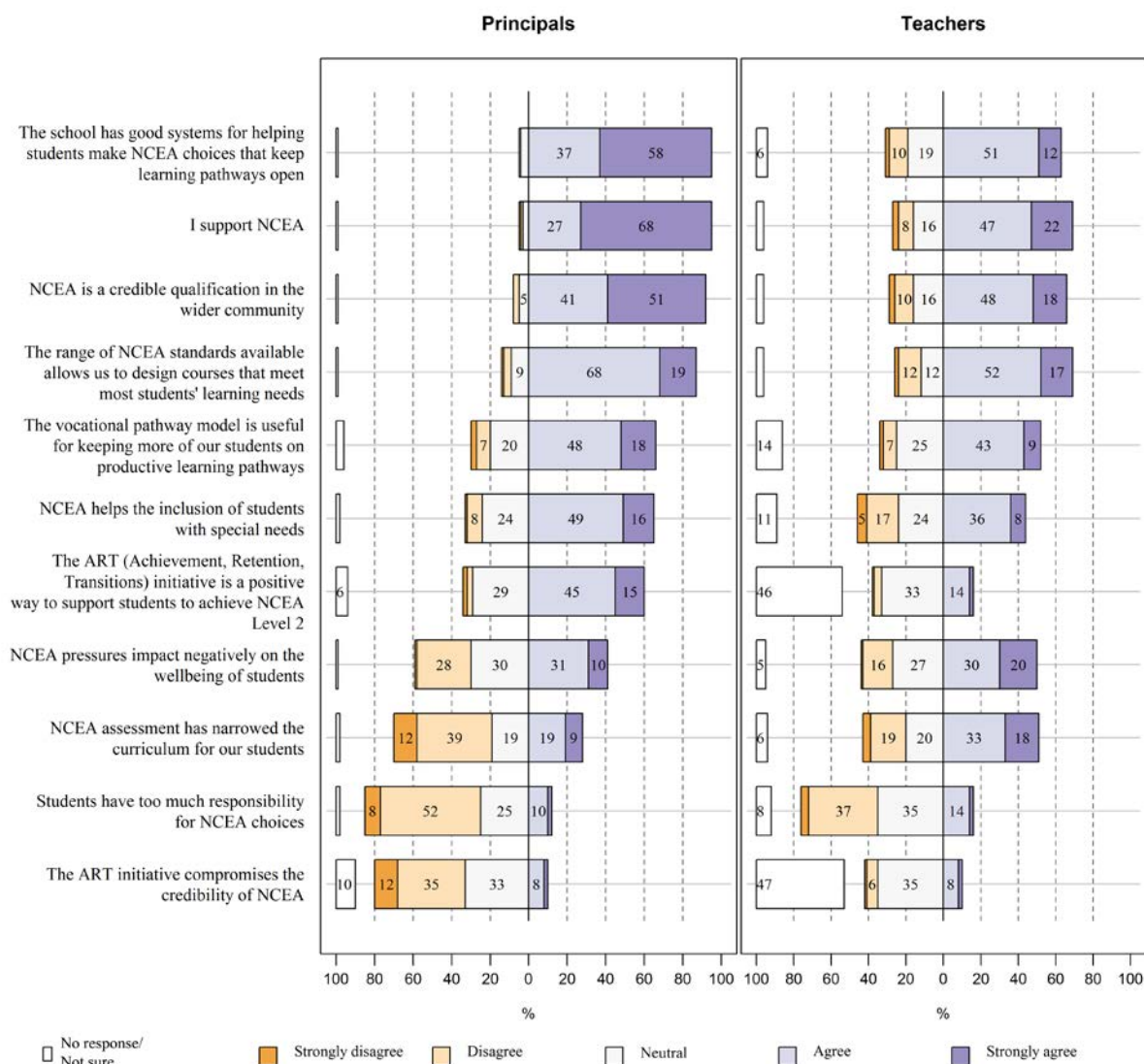
Although support for NCEA remained stable, a tension between traditional and more transformative expectations has lingered. Principals and teachers in lower-decile schools were more positive about initiatives that support an inclusive approach to credentialing all students' learning gains, such as the Vocational Pathways and Achievement Retention Transitions (ART), in contrast to the traditional sorting of students according to ability.

## **An overview of principals' and teachers' views of NCEA**

Principals' and teachers' views about NCEA are shown in Figure 6. Overall, both groups were supportive of NCEA and how it was implemented in their school, although teachers were less sanguine than principals. However, there was also a feeling that NCEA has narrowed the curriculum and impacted negatively on student wellbeing. We will look more closely at these items throughout this chapter, and compare teachers' and principals' responses in 2015 to those of 2012 and 2009.



FIGURE 6 Principals' and teachers' NCEA-related views



### Consolidation of support for NCEA

All NZCER national secondary survey rounds have included the item “I am supportive of NCEA”.<sup>18</sup> Table 5 shows patterns of responses from all four groups surveyed.

18 In 2015 the wording was simplified to “I support NCEA”. The sentiment is unchanged.

TABLE 5 Support for NCEA 2003–15

I support NCEA (agree/strongly agree)	Parents and whānau %	Trustees %	Teachers %	Principals %
2003 responses	44	*	65	87
2006 responses	37	58	60	89
2009 responses	45	68	69	95
2012 responses	54	73	68	94
2015 responses	55	69	69	95

\*Not asked

Support for NCEA was generally much the same in 2015 as it was in 2012. Over the years, principals have consistently voiced the strongest support. Teachers and trustees follow. There was a small, statistically significant downward shift in levels of support from trustees from 2012. It took until 2012 before being supportive of NCEA was the majority view for parents. In 2015, 30% of parents expressed a neutral view of NCEA, with only 8% of parents not supporting it.

As was found in 2012, parents and whānau with a child in Years 11–13 (who had therefore had more experience with NCEA) were more likely to support NCEA than those whose children had not yet reached the senior secondary level: 61% of parents with children in Years 11–13 indicated they supported NCEA, compared with 48% of those with children in Years 9–10 only.

NCEA is a rather different system of assessment than the one used to assess many of today's adults when they were at school. Since people are more likely to support a system they feel they understand, we asked parents and trustees several questions related to their understanding of NCEA. This showed that:

- 63% of parents and whānau agreed that they understand how NCEA works, compared with 48% in 2012 when we asked this question for the first time. For those with students in Years 11–13 in 2015, the figure was 73%
- 21% of parents and whānau agreed or strongly agreed that “I find my child's NCEA results confusing”. The figure for those with students in Years 11–13 was 26%.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, of the 73% of parents and whānau with children in Years 11–13 who agreed they understood how NCEA works, more than half also disagreed they find their child's results confusing. The reverse also applied: of the 9% who disagreed they understand how NCEA works, 79% also indicated they find their child's NCEA results confusing. Seventeen percent of parents with a child in Years 11–13 gave a neutral response or were unsure whether they understand how NCEA works. Responses from this group of parents about whether they found their child's NCEA results confusing were less clear cut (43% were also neutral or unsure about this, 45% agreed they were confusing and 12% disagreed).

Of those with children at these year levels who agreed they understand how NCEA works, 15% also said they find their child's NCEA results confusing. Thus having an understanding of how NCEA works as a qualification does not always equate with understanding particular NCEA results:

- 87% of trustees said they understand how NCEA works
- 71% of trustees agreed that NCEA is a valuable record of student learning—the same as in 2012.

### Is NCEA seen as a credible qualification in the wider community?

Another angle for probing support is to ask respondents if they perceive NCEA to be a credible qualification in the wider community. This item was added to the survey in 2009 so can now be tracked over three survey rounds. Response patterns are shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6 Perceptions of the credibility of NCEA; 2009, 2012 and 2015

<i>NCEA is a credible qualification in the wider community (agree/strongly agree)</i>	Parents and whānau %	Trustees %	Teachers %	Principals %
2009 responses	37	48	47	81
2012 responses	51	56	58	82
2015 responses	59	63	66	92

Perceptions that NCEA is a credible qualification in the wider community have improved steadily since 2009. Again, a greater proportion of principals thought this. Interestingly, in 2015 slightly more parents thought NCEA was credible in the wider community (59%) than said they personally supported it (55%).

### Alternative qualifications

In the early years of NCEA some schools responded to perceptions of parental concerns about NCEA's credibility by turning to alternative examination systems, especially for the assessment of their most able students. Between 2012 and 2015 there was almost no change in the proportions of principals reporting that some students were assessed using Cambridge Examinations (10%) or the International Baccalaureate (1%). Principals of decile 7–10 schools were more likely to indicate they use Cambridge examinations (19%) than principals of decile 3–6 secondary schools (5%). No principals of decile 1–2 schools reported their students were assessed using Cambridge examinations.

## A focus on achievement, retention and transitions

NCEA matters to students and families:

- 94% of parents and whānau agreed that getting a qualification such as NCEA was important in their child's education
- 32% of trustees agreed that NCEA league tables had a positive impact on roll numbers at the school. In the 2012 survey this figure had been lower (19%).

NCEA has become a specific target for the Government in evaluating how well the education system is doing overall. The Better Public Services targets, introduced just before the 2012 survey round, included a target for 85% of young people to achieve at least a Level 2 NCEA by the time they are 18, by 2017. At the time of the 2012 survey, some principals and teachers expressed concerns about this initiative, which they saw as a potential threat to NCEA's credibility. While students can continue to gain NCEA credits from employment-related tertiary courses, secondary teachers and principals were concerned that this target would be used to judge schools.

To support schools to improve student achievement of NCEA Level 2, the Ministry of Education introduced the ART programme. This was put in place to identify and support students thought to be at risk of not achieving NCEA Level 2, particularly Māori and Pasifika students. It is specifically aimed at increasing the education outcomes for students who have traditionally been under-served by New Zealand's education system.

In 2015 we asked teachers and principals for their views about ART. Mindful of the concerns expressed in open responses to the 2012 survey,<sup>19</sup> we shaped two new items. One was positively worded ("The ART initiative is a positive way to support students to achieve NCEA Level 2"). The second item was negatively

<sup>19</sup> Hipkins, R. (2013). *NCEA one decade on: Views and experiences from the 2012 NZCER national survey of secondary schools*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

worded to capture the concerns expressed in 2012 (“The ART initiative compromises the credibility of NCEA”). Many principals (60%) and a much lower proportion of teachers (16%) agreed that ART was a positive way to support students. Ten percent of both groups agreed that ART compromised the credibility of NCEA.

Figure 6 shows a high level of ambivalence or uncertainty about ART, especially from the teachers. When “neutral” and “not sure/no response” options were totalled, 82% of teachers did not commit to a view either way on whether ART compromises the credibility of NCEA and 79% did not express a view either way on whether ART provides positive support for students to achieve NCEA Level 2. ART tends to be managed at the senior leadership level and typically involves deans or academic mentors, so many teachers would not have been directly involved in implementing the agreed actions. Teachers who also had AP/DP or deans’ roles were more likely to voice an opinion about ART; 32% and 21%, respectively, agreed the ART is a positive way to help students to get NCEA Level 2. However, more than half those in these roles responded neither affirmatively nor negatively to the two ART-related items.

Many principals also seemed undecided about ART. Just under half (43%) were neutral or did not know if ART compromised the credibility of NCEA. Fewer (35%) were neutral or did not know if ART was a positive way to support students to gain a Level 2 NCEA. It seems that for many school professionals the jury is still out on this support programme, or they do not actually know about it.

There was an association between decile and teachers’ responses to the two ART-related items: 25% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools agreed that the ART initiative is a positive way to help students achieve NCEA Level 2, decreasing to 8% of teachers at decile 9–10 schools. Most teachers at schools of all deciles gave “neutral” or “not sure” responses to this item (64% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools, increasing to 85% of teachers at decile 9–10 schools).

Similarly, teachers at low-decile schools were more likely to disagree that the ART initiative compromises the credibility of NCEA (13% for decile 1–2 schools, compared with 4% for decile 9–10 schools). The same ART-related trends were not evident for principals.

### **Pressure to improve NCEA results**

In 2012 just over half the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they felt under unfair pressure to boost their students’ NCEA results. For 2015 this item was reworded to be more neutral: “I feel under pressure to improve my students’ NCEA results”. In 2015, 77% of secondary teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were under pressure to improve their students’ NCEA results. The ART initiative and the Better Public Services target of 85% of 18-year-olds achieving NCEA Level 2 are likely to have contributed to this high proportion feeling under pressure. As well, there has been a concerted focus on Teaching as Inquiry. NCEA results are likely to be an important data source when teachers make changes to their practice and inquire into the impact. This strong focus on professional inquiry could also have contributed to the perception of greater scrutiny of NCEA results, though what teaching as inquiry means in practice is still very variable.

### **Responding to the needs of *all* learners**

Several other policy initiatives support the intent of ART. For example, when students make good pathways choices, and schools put in place the support systems to help them stay on these pathways, it is less likely that any NCEA qualifications these students gain will comprise a loose amalgam of assessment standards that offer “easy” credits. That was, and is, a main concern of those who see NCEA’s credibility being undermined by setting a specific Level 2 target. So how are these complementary policies working out in practice?

## Vocational pathways

In 2013 the Ministry of Education, in partnership with Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), formally launched five “Vocational Pathways” with a sixth pathway added in 2014.<sup>20</sup> These pathways were designed to help students connect the curriculum/subject choices they make for NCEA Level 2 and the world of work. They do this by showing which Level 2 achievement standards could help build a strong learning pathway towards a career in one of the six industries in focus. By mapping explicit links between a student’s achievements, strengths and interests, and future possibilities for study and employment, Vocational Pathways provide more options for students to achieve NCEA Level 2. With input from the six industries included, “all of the pathways identify skills that are valued by employers across all sectors. Maths and English skills are especially important across all pathways ...”<sup>21</sup>

We asked principals and teachers for their views about the usefulness of the vocational pathway model for keeping more of their students on productive learning pathways (see Figure 6). Many principals (66%) and just over half the teachers (52%) agreed or strongly agreed that the vocational pathways model is useful for keeping students on productive learning pathways. Again, there were many “neutral” or “not sure” responses from teachers: when added together they total 39%, and only 10% of principals and 9% of teachers disagreed that the Vocational Pathways model was useful.

Eighty percent of principals of decile 1–2 schools thought the Vocational Pathway model was useful, decreasing to 53% of principals of decile 9–10 schools. Teachers’ responses to the same item also differed by decile, although not so markedly; 55% of teachers in decile 1–2 schools and 57% of those in decile 3–4 schools thought the pathways model was useful, decreasing to 48% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools.

## School systems to design and track learning pathways

It is up to each school to design a programme of learning that provides coherent pathways for students with different learning needs, and to provide the support systems that help students make sound course choices within this system. The survey included several items about these challenges.

Sixty-six percent of principals and 28% of trustees indicated they use NCEA results to decide which courses and standards to offer in future. Teachers were not asked this question.

Table 7 shows the extent to which respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “The school has good systems for helping students make NCEA choices that keep learning pathways open”. This question was asked for the first time in 2012, but was not included in the parent and whānau questionnaire until 2015.

TABLE 7 Perceptions of school systems that support students to make pathways choices; 2012 and 2015

The school has good systems for helping students make NCEA choices that keep learning pathways open (agree/strongly agree)	Parents and whānau %	Trustees %	Teachers %	Principals %
2012 responses	*	81	59	92
2015 responses	61	86	63	95

\*Not asked

In 2015 there were high levels of agreement with this statement from both principals and trustees, slightly more than in 2012. Around a third of parents and teachers did not agree with this statement, but they were more likely to be unsure, or to not respond, than to actually disagree.

<sup>20</sup> <http://youthguarantee.net.nz/vocational-pathways/>

<sup>21</sup> According to Careers NZ’s information about Vocational Pathways, on their website: [http://www.careers.govt.nz/courses/still-at-school/vocational-pathways/#cid\\_688](http://www.careers.govt.nz/courses/still-at-school/vocational-pathways/#cid_688)

Teachers at high-decile schools were somewhat more likely to agree that their school had good systems for helping students make NCEA choices that keep learning pathways open (69% of teachers at decile 9–10 schools, compared with 58% at decile 1–2 schools).

NCEA credits can be gained for achievement specified in a wide range of achievement standards, and/or employment-related unit standards owned by the ITOs. This range of choices should allow every school to design courses that meet the needs of all their students, but do they see it that way? Table 8 shows principal and teacher responses to the statement “The range of NCEA standards available allows us to design courses that meet most students’ learning needs”. This question was asked for the first time in 2012.

**TABLE 8 Do NCEA standards allow course design across the range of student learning needs? 2012 and 2015**

The range of NCEA standards available allows us to design courses that meet most students’ learning needs (agree/strongly agree)	Teachers %	Principals %
2012 responses	56	74
2015 responses	70	86

More principals and teachers thought that the range of NCEA standards did allow them to design courses that met most students’ learning needs in 2015. This is a noteworthy shift in agreement, consistent with the recent emphasis on vocational pathways and the importance of supporting all students to experience meaningful achievement gains. A similar shift can be seen in Table 9, which drills down to pay attention to those students whose learning needs are arguably the most challenging to meet.

**TABLE 9 Does NCEA help with the inclusion of students with special needs?<sup>22</sup> 2012 and 2015**

NCEA helps with the inclusion of students with special needs (agree/strongly agree)	Teachers %	Principals %
2012 responses	31	48
2015 responses	43	65

In 2012 just under a third of the teachers could see a role for NCEA in building inclusive practices. By 2015 this proportion had increased to 43%. Correspondingly, disagreement/strong disagreement fell somewhat (28% in 2012 to 22% in 2015). Around a third of teachers were unsure or held no view on this statement.

Principals are more likely to consider inclusion at the whole-school level, which might help explain why a greater proportion of them could see the potential for NCEA to make a contribution to inclusive practices. There were some links between principals’ agreement with this statement and their views on vocational pathways and ART. Nearly two-thirds of the principals who agreed that NCEA helps with the inclusion of students with special needs also agreed the Vocational Pathway model is useful for keeping more students on productive learning pathways. A similar proportion who agreed NCEA helps with inclusion also thought ART is a positive way to support students to achieve NCEA Level 2.

Teachers’ and principals’ views about NCEA’s role in building inclusive practices did not vary by school decile.

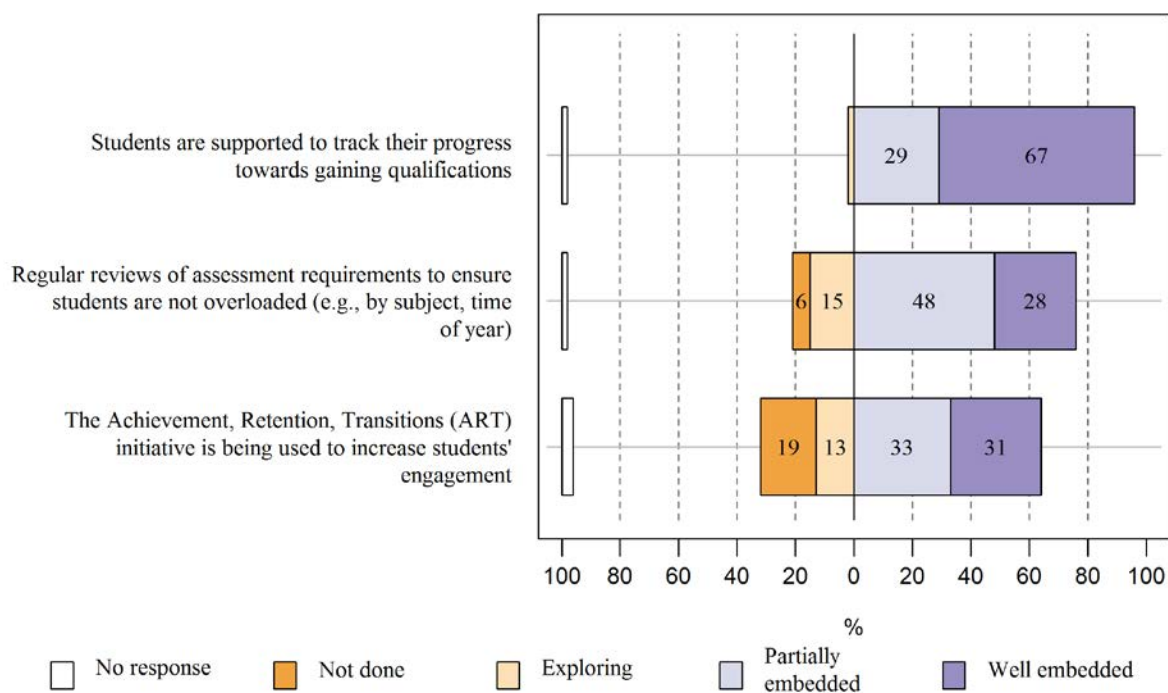
<sup>22</sup> As we write this report in 2016, there is a shift away from the use of the description “students with special needs” towards the expression “students with additional learning needs”. For consistency with the wording used in the 2015 surveys, we use the former throughout this report.



## Supporting students to stay on their qualification pathway

Almost all the schools had systems to support students to track their progress towards gaining a qualification: in 67%, these were well embedded, and in 29%, partially embedded. Reviews of assessment requirements to check that students are not overloaded are common, but not so well embedded, as shown in Figure 7 below. Around two-thirds were using the ART initiative to increase student engagement.

FIGURE 7 Supporting students' progress towards gaining qualifications; principal reports (n = 182)



## Teachers' curriculum thinking

Teachers work within overall school structures but they have a great deal of autonomy, at least in theory, to design courses as they want to, within their school's overall programme. Even so, just over half the teachers (51%) agreed or strongly agreed that "NCEA assessment has narrowed the curriculum for my students". Sixty-three percent of Mathematics and Science teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

We also asked teachers about the effects of NCEA on programmes for Years 9 and 10 students. Sixty-three percent of teachers reported NCEA played an increasing part in their school's curriculum for Years 9 and 10. Forty percent confirmed their Years 9 and 10 students do practice exams for NCEA. These figures did not vary with school decile.

In 2015 the proportions of teachers who viewed NCEA as a barrier to making changes to or maintaining the quality of the curriculum were smaller than in 2012 but still somewhat larger than in 2009:

- 47% identified time taken for NCEA assessments as a barrier (between the 52% in 2012 and 30% in 2009)
- 43% identified NCEA requirements as a barrier (between the 57% in 2012 and 38% in 2009).



Once again, this may be related to the work involved in the alignment of NCEA and NZC around the time of the 2012 survey.

In 2015 we added a new potential barrier to the list: “UE requirements too restrictive on course design”. We did this because regulations for determining University Entrance are based on Level 3 NCEA results, but with some specific provisos about how credits are distributed across subjects. These regulations were tightened in the period between the 2012 and 2015 surveys. Seven percent of the teachers selected this new item as a barrier to making changes or maintaining the quality of the curriculum they teach.

We also asked teachers whether they thought online assessment of NCEA is a positive move, and 40% agreed it was. A slightly greater proportion (46%) agreed that the NZQA moderation expectations are clear, while 30% disagreed and 21% gave neutral/not sure responses. Teachers of Mathematics and Science were least likely to agree the moderation expectations are clear (35%).

### The impact of NCEA on teacher workloads

The impact of NCEA on teacher workloads has been an issue ever since its inception. There is a potential opportunity cost for the time this takes up: 45% of teachers selected the item “Workload too heavy” as a barrier to making curriculum changes. The reference here is to workload in general, but a separate item asked about the manageability of their NCEA workload in particular:

- 32% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their NCEA-related workload was manageable, while 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed that this was the case
- workloads seemed to be more manageable for teachers in small schools (46% agreement, decreasing to 29% for large schools), and for those in decile 1–2 schools (37%, compared with 27% for decile 9–10 schools)
- 84% of principals agreed that teachers struggle with their NCEA workload.

Elsewhere, the principal and teacher surveys included a bank of items that described things that could be seen as “major issues facing the school”. One of these items was “NCEA workload for teachers”.<sup>23</sup> There was a notable increase in the proportion of principals who saw this as a major issue for the school—compared with past survey rounds, this view now seems more prevalent among principals than among teachers:

- 65% of principals identified NCEA workload for teachers as a major issue facing their school (increasing from 49% in 2012, and 39% in 2009)
- 51% of teachers identified NCEA workload as a major issue facing their school. This is slightly less than in 2012 when NCEA and NZC were being aligned (58%) and is slightly more than in 2009 (46%)
- teacher responses about their NCEA workload were associated with school decile; NCEA workload was identified by 46% of teachers at decile 1–6 and 56% at decile 7–10 schools, as a major issue facing the school.

Teachers who agreed they supported NCEA were also more likely to agree with a group of related items, including those about their NCEA-related workload. In particular, teachers who agreed they supported NCEA were more likely to say they had:

- good or very good morale (74%, compared with 49% of those who did not support NCEA)
- a manageable workload (65%, compared with 46%)
- a manageable level of work-related stress (65%, compared with 51%)
- a fair workload (58%, compared with 42%)
- a manageable NCEA-related workload (37%, compared with 17%).

23 In the 2009 and 2012 surveys, the item was simply “NCEA workload”. In 2015 we split this into two items: “NCEA workload for teachers” and “NCEA workload for students”.

The teachers who supported NCEA were less likely to agree that:

- NCEA pressures are impacting negatively on their students' wellbeing (46%, compared with 72% of teachers who did not support NCEA).

## Impacts for students

Even when schools design strong pathways, students must still make choices. While parents and whānau are often involved in making course choices, students may not consult them if they choose not to complete internally assessed work. Too many such choices as a course unfolds could result in not achieving the necessary spread of credits to keep a chosen pathway open. Should students have so much responsibility, even if they don't actually exercise the potential for making choices? We have asked about this over four survey rounds now. Table 10 shows low levels of support for the view that NCEA gives students too much responsibility, across all four groups of respondents.

TABLE 10 **Do students have too much responsibility for their NCEA choices? 2006-15**

Students have too much responsibility for NCEA choices (agree/strongly agree)	Parents and whānau %	Trustees %	Teachers %	Principals %
2006 responses	14	26	28	16
2009 responses	16	14	16	12
2012 responses	16	8	20	11
2015 responses	13	12	16	13

Five percent of parents and whānau wrote comments that reflected concern about their children's subject choices and career pathways. These comments described some of the factors parents saw affecting subject offerings and how their children choose their subjects:

School too small so when you get to Year 13, you have to compromise on your subject choices as some subjects clash with others and you then have to choose one or the other. Whereas at a larger school, you would have more options.

Unfortunately my child has made subject choices based on the teachers that are likely to be taking the class. There are several teachers that are known to be disinterested and unmotivating who are guaranteed to be teaching the following year and so we know several children who have not chosen that subject. Likewise there are fabulous teachers that this year we have enjoyed who we are not sure will be around next year and can only hope that they are so as to keep our child motivated and enjoying studies.

School needs to offer more than one language that the students can take up without sacrificing other important subjects; e.g., if the student had to take Japanese as a full year language he had to drop computers as one of the other subjects.

Disappointed that my youngest has to change schools for Yr 11 to enable her to take the subject that she needs for her chosen career path.

Other parents and whānau voiced concern about the support their child received to plan their career pathways:

Kids need career guidance so they can pick their subjects more accurately. At the moment they choose a variety of subjects which do not aim them to the career or degree they want to pursue; certain careers/degrees requires one to have the right mix of subjects. There is a great lack in this area. Kids are confused in their career path or the degree they thought they could pursue as a result.

We have sought outside help for careers guidance to make option choices as both my girls felt that what the school offered was inadequate—or the waiting time too lengthy—accessibility poor.

Need more resources, more funding for supporting child's transition from school to careers pathway, assisting choices/subjects throughout year not just at end of year for following year.

The assessment-related anxiety that some students experience was acknowledged as an issue in a recent ERO report about students' wellbeing.<sup>24</sup> One-third of parents and whānau (33%) agreed or strongly agreed that their child gets anxious about NCEA assessments, and a further 47% were neutral or unsure. For those with a child in Years 11–13, 42% indicated their child gets anxious about NCEA assessments.

Fifty percent of the teachers, 41% of the principals and 13% of the trustees agreed or strongly agreed that NCEA pressures impact negatively on the wellbeing of students. Teachers' agreement with this increased with school decile and school size.

In their comments at the end of the survey, 4% of teachers expressed concern about the effects of assessment on students' wellbeing and learning. This teacher's comment illustrates their concerns:

Consequences for an assessment-led curriculum with a focus on academic success—anxious students who are increasingly dependent on teachers due to their desire to do well (achieve with excellence) doing 22 credits across 6 subjects (132 credits). This anxiety can lead to assessment fatigue or assessment avoidance due to fear of failure. It is time to shift the focus to academic success and at the same time developing learners' skills in resilient agency, creativity, curiosity using a growth mindset where effort is rewarded.

We also asked whether the NCEA workload for *students* was a major issue facing the school. Thirty-nine percent of teachers indicated it was a major issue for their school, as did 34% of principals. Ten percent of parents and 7% of trustees noted this as a major issue facing the school. Again, there were decile-related differences. Students' NCEA workload was identified as a major issue by 30% of teachers at decile 1–6 schools, compared with 49% of those at decile 7–10 schools. These differences were amplified in principals' responses, with less than 20% of principals at decile 1–4 schools identifying student workload as an issue, compared with 69% of principals at decile 9–10 schools.

## Summary and discussion

In 2015 support for NCEA was stable, and perceptions about its credibility in the wider community have continued to improve. Schools have consolidated their systems to support students to make good pathways choices and greater proportions of teachers and principals were now saying that NCEA's flexibility can help them design courses that meet most students' needs. Congruent with this, there was increased recognition that NCEA can help with inclusion.

This is the good news. There were, however, indications of ongoing tensions that have not been resolved, or that may have become worse over the past 3 years. At the very heart of NCEA there is a tension between traditional and more transformative expectations. NCEA confounds the long-established tradition that high-stakes assessments will sort students according to ability levels, and that only some

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24 Education Review Office. (2015). *Wellbeing for young people's success at secondary school*. Downloaded 2 March 2016, from <http://ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Wellbeing-for-Young-People-s-Success-at-Secondary-School-February-2015>

can succeed. NCEA has a more inclusive orientation, having been designed to allow meaningful learning gains of all students to be credentialed. Both orientations have strengths and challenges but in the absence of careful public debate about these, teachers and schools can get caught up in conflicting expectations and mixed messages.

This dynamic is likely to underlie the pattern of decile-related differences in responses. Principals and teachers in lower-decile schools were more positive about the Vocational Pathways and ART initiatives—both of which support the inclusive intent to credential all students' meaningful learning gains. They were less likely to see students' NCEA workloads as a major issue, or as something that was impacting negatively on student wellbeing. They were also less likely to see teacher NCEA workloads as an issue.

Conversely, a continuing expectation of competitive sorting could help explain the pressure that is being experienced by teachers and students, and particularly those in high-decile schools. As school decile increased, leaders and teachers were more likely to say students were struggling under high NCEA workloads, yet these workloads arise in large part from the school's curriculum and assessment programme. (Students' expectations of themselves no doubt also play a role but we have no data about these.) If students have a higher workload, then so must their teachers, given that just 26–30% of all standards achieved in any one year are externally assessed.<sup>25</sup> Principals' awareness of this issue appears to have increased in 2015, perhaps because the concerted focus on pathways and targets has put NCEA into the school-wide spotlight.

Parents and whānau with children in Years 11–13, who had more experience of NCEA, tended to be more supportive of NCEA than those whose children were not yet in the senior part of the secondary school. Nonetheless, some of these parents also indicated they found their child's NCEA results confusing.

NCEA was having an effect at Years 9 and 10, with some teachers giving their classes practice exams for NCEA, an indication of the pervasive effects of the qualification in secondary schools. Most teachers were feeling under pressure to improve their students' results.

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25 See Chapter 4 of Hipkins, R., Johnston, M., & Sheehan, M. (in press). *NCEA in context*. Wellington: NZCER Press.

## 4.

# Learning with digital technology<sup>26</sup>

**Given the high priority the Government has placed on learning with digital technology, there are many questions worth asking. How is digital technology being used for learning in New Zealand secondary school classrooms? What opportunities do students have to learn with digital technology? Do these opportunities involve using technology to re-package existing pedagogies, or are there signs that digital technology is being used in innovative ways that involve pedagogical transformation? Are students using online technology for working collaboratively—are they really “connected”? As well as identifying what is happening at the classroom level, we were interested to find out how BYOD policies were playing out in schools and—importantly—how they might be related to students’ access to learning with digital technology.**

We asked teachers and principals about students’ learning experiences with digital technology in the classroom. We asked parents and whānau about the importance they placed on their children having opportunities for learning with digital technology, and about their role in providing a digital device.

Many of our questions about learning with digital technology were new questions that have not been asked in previous national surveys. Developing survey items and response options in a sometimes fast-moving space that can capture a rich and relevant picture of current practice can be challenging. As we will see throughout this chapter, some of the items we used for the first time in 2015 achieved our purposes better than others.

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<sup>26</sup> We thank Rachel Bolstad at NZCER for her helpful advice and feedback on the learning with digital technology component of the National Survey.

The Government's digital strategy prioritises schools having state-of-the-art infrastructure (including reliable high-speed broadband and fully-funded uncapped data), 21st century teaching and learning and equitable access to quality content and resources (Kaye, 2015<sup>27</sup>). Aiming for a co-ordinated, system-wide shift towards these goals, the Ministry of Education created Network for Learning (N4L), a company set up to build a managed network and to provide ultra-fast broadband to schools. Additional Ministry-funded support to help achieve these goals includes the Connected Learning Advisory/Te Ara Whītiki, that provides free advice to schools on how to incorporate digital technology into teaching and learning, and the Virtual Learning Network (VLN), that supports teachers to connect and collaborate with colleagues online. VLN also enables schools to connect with one another to share resources (e.g., students from a number of schools can share a teacher for a subject that the individual schools are unable to resource).

Numerous international studies (e.g., IEA, 2013;<sup>28</sup> OECD, 2015<sup>29</sup>) have underscored the importance of matching the investment in hardware and infrastructure with similar investments in teacher professional learning and development (PLD). The Information and Communication Technologies Professional Development (ICTPD) School Clusters Programme was part of New Zealand's teacher PLD landscape from 1999 until around 10 years ago. The programme aimed to increase teachers' pedagogical understandings of ICTs in order to support effective classroom teaching and improve student achievement. More recently, Ministry-funded providers such as Te Toi Tupu have offered PLD to support learning with digital technologies. The Ministry-funded website, Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI), has been developed as a "go to" place for e-learning resources, networks and PLD information, which includes the Virtual Professional Learning and Development Programme.

In a November 2015 speech,<sup>30</sup> the Associate Minister of Education, Nikki Kaye, said the Government had decided to "make digital fluency a national priority for professional development from 2017" (p. 4), suggesting the Government intends a concerted focus on PLD for teachers once the infrastructure is in place across the country.

Against this backdrop, we wondered if the survey responses would capture a picture of schools that are now well equipped with hardware and infrastructure, and whose teachers are looking for PLD to help them transform what is happening in their classes, rather than simply using digital technology as an alternative delivery mode for existing learning activities. Aware of particular initiatives in low-decile schools, such as the Manaiakalani cluster,<sup>31</sup> aimed at building teachers' digital pedagogies, we were interested to see what school decile-related differences might emerge from the data.

### School infrastructure and support for using digital technology

Ninety-five percent of principals indicated their school's ICT network had been upgraded for ultra-fast broadband. Smaller proportions said their school had adequate expertise (61%) or adequate resources (46%) to support good-quality learning with digital technology. ICT technical support was being undertaken by teachers who were funded over entitlement<sup>32</sup> in 15% of secondary schools. Most principals (74%) indicated they can readily access external expertise to keep developing e-learning at their school.

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27 Kaye, N. (2015). *Speech to Bett Asia Leadership Summit 2015*. Downloaded 19 November 2015, from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-bett-asia-leadership-summit-2015>

28 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. (2015). *International computer and information literacy study: Preparing for life in a digital age*. Downloaded 10 August 2015, from [http://www.iea.nl/icils\\_2013.html](http://www.iea.nl/icils_2013.html)

29 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2015). *Teaching in focus 12: Teaching with technology*. Downloaded 10 August 2015, from [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/teaching-with-technology\\_5jrxnhpp6p8v-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/teaching-with-technology_5jrxnhpp6p8v-en)

30 The text is available at: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-bett-asia-leadership-summit-2015>

31 See Hipkins, R., Whatman, J., & MacDonald, J. (2015). *Evaluation of the Manaiakalani Digital Teaching Academy*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Retrieved 25 March 2016, from <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/evaluation-manaiakalani-digital-teaching-academy>

32 Each year, school boards receive entitlement staffing from the Ministry of Education, based on school roll numbers. Teachers who are "funded over entitlement" are those who boards fund in other ways.

A BYOD policy was in place at 62% of schools. In 40% of these schools, the whole school was BYOD, with device type(s) unspecified. Slightly more (44% of schools with a BYOD policy) were in the process of rolling out their BYOD policy one year group at a time. A small group of schools (7%) had a school-wide BYOD policy with device(s) specified. For 54% of principals of schools with BYOD policies, the inability of parents and whānau to buy a device for their child was a barrier for a small number of students. Twenty percent reported this was a barrier for a large number of students. For a further 24%, this was not a barrier at all.

Of the 37% of schools with no BYOD policy, 58% provided digital devices that students share (e.g., in a computer lab or spread around the school). Principals of a further 22% of schools without BYOD policies indicated they are still considering how to implement digital devices for learning at their school.

Whether or not a school had a BYOD policy varied with school size. Large schools were more likely to have a BYOD policy in place (81%, decreasing to 36% for small schools).

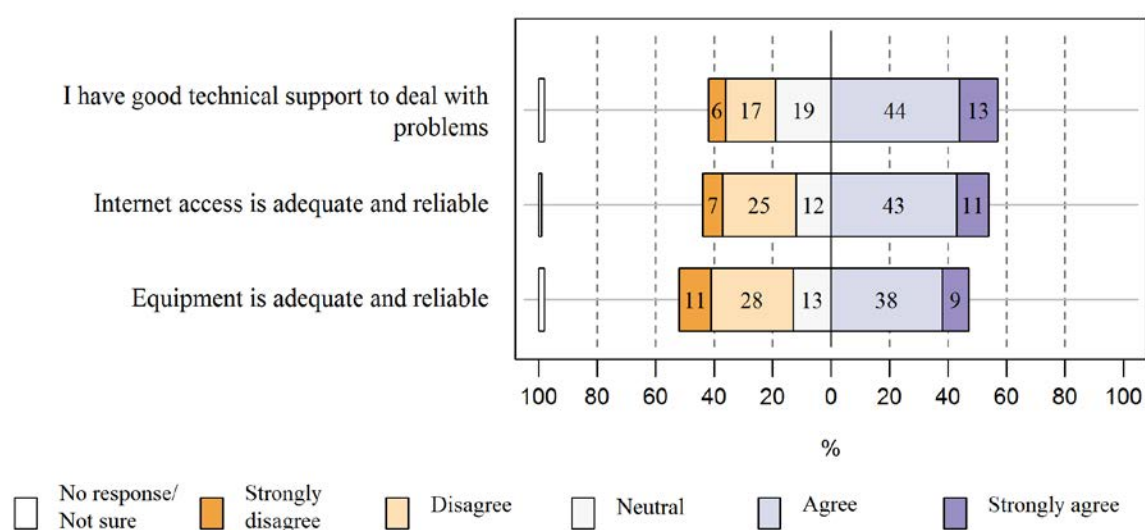
There were some decile-related differences. Principals of low-decile schools were more likely to report that at their school:

- the inability or unwillingness of parents and whānau to buy a device for their child was a barrier for a large number of students (88% of principals at decile 1–2 schools, decreasing sharply to 3% for decile 9–10 schools)
- there is adequate expertise to support good-quality learning with digital technology (60% for decile 1–2, and 43% for decile 3–4, increasing to 72% for decile 9–10 schools).

Forty percent of principals at decile 1–4 schools reported a BYOD policy was in place, increasing to 83% of those of decile 9–10 schools. Principals at three decile 1–4 schools (12% of schools in this decile range) reported having lease-to-buy schemes in place.

We asked teachers about the practical support they have for using digital technology for learning (see Figure 8). Over half the teachers agreed or strongly agreed they have the practical support and Internet access they need to implement learning with digital technology, with fewer (47%) reporting the equipment they have is adequate and reliable.

FIGURE 8 Teachers' views of practical support for using digital technology for learning (n = 1,777)





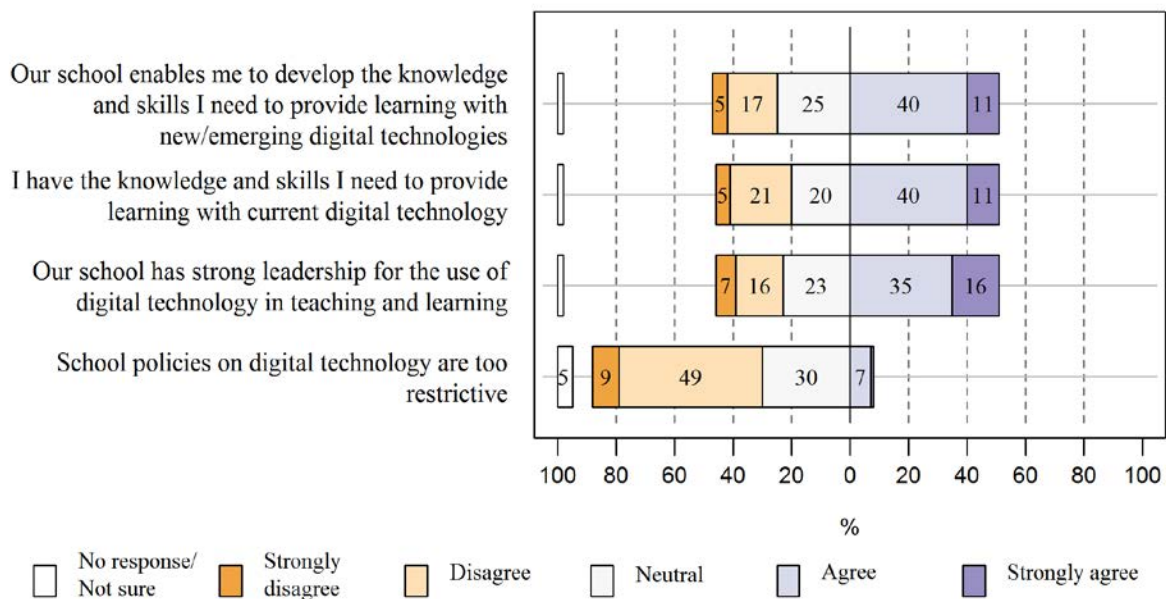
Teachers at high-decile schools were more likely to report having adequate and reliable equipment and good technical support than teachers at low- and mid-decile schools. For example, 51% of teachers at decile 1–6 schools reported having good technical support to deal with problems, compared with 64% of those at decile 7–10 schools. School size was also a factor, with more teachers at large schools (69%) reporting they have good technical support, compared with all other schools (53%).

In the 2012 survey, 53% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that student use of ICT for learning in their classes doesn't happen because equipment/access is too slow/unreliable/of insufficient quantity. Although the same question was not asked in 2015, the responses in Figure 8 suggest a slight improvement in this situation.

### Support for teachers to implement learning with digital technology

Just over half the teachers agreed they had the conditions needed to implement learning with digital technology (see Figure 9). Few teachers thought that their school policies on digital technology were too restrictive.

FIGURE 9 Teachers' views of implementing learning with digital technology (n = 1,777)



There were no decile-related differences in teachers' reports of adequate, reliable Internet access or their having the knowledge and skills they need to provide learning with current digital technology. However, teachers in decile 7–10 schools were more likely to agree or strongly agree their school has strong leadership for the use of digital technology in teaching and learning (61%, compared with 43% of teachers in decile 1–6 schools). Teachers at high-decile schools were also more likely to agree or strongly agree their school enables them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to provide learning with new/emerging digital technologies (57% for decile 7–10, compared with 45% for decile 1–6 schools).

Less experienced teachers were more confident they have the knowledge and skills needed to provide learning with digital technology; 72% of teachers with less than 3 years' experience agreed, decreasing to 43% of teachers with at least 15 years' teaching experience. Unsurprisingly, the trend according to teachers' age closely mirrored this, with teachers under 30 years most likely to agree they have the knowledge and skills needed for this.

## Students' access to digital technology

As Table 11 shows, teachers most frequently reported their school provides devices that students share. Just over half the teachers indicated their schools were (also) BYOD schools, with close to two-thirds indicating students can use their BYOD devices in the courses they teach. Very few teachers reported their school providing all students with devices. Half of the "Other" responses were comments that BYOD is still being introduced across the school.

TABLE 11 **Students' access to digital technology at secondary schools**

Access	Teachers (n = 1,777) %
The school provides devices that students share (e.g., in a computer lab, or spread around the school)	72
Students can use their BYOD devices in the courses I teach	65
We are a BYOD school	53
The school provides devices that are used only in some courses	15
Other	8
The school provides each student with a device	2

There were decile-related differences reflecting more restricted access to digital technology for students at low-decile schools. Echoing principals' responses, teachers in decile 1–2 schools were also less likely to report their school is a BYOD school (24% for decile 1–2, increasing to 66% for decile 9–10), or that students can use their BYOD devices in courses they teach (43% up to 72%, respectively). Because fewer students at low-decile schools had their own digital devices, these schools were more likely than high-decile schools to provide:

- shared devices (85% for decile 1–2, decreasing to 56% for decile 9–10 schools)
- devices for use only in some courses (25%, compared with 9%)
- each student with a device, though this was uncommon (7%, decreasing to less than 1%).

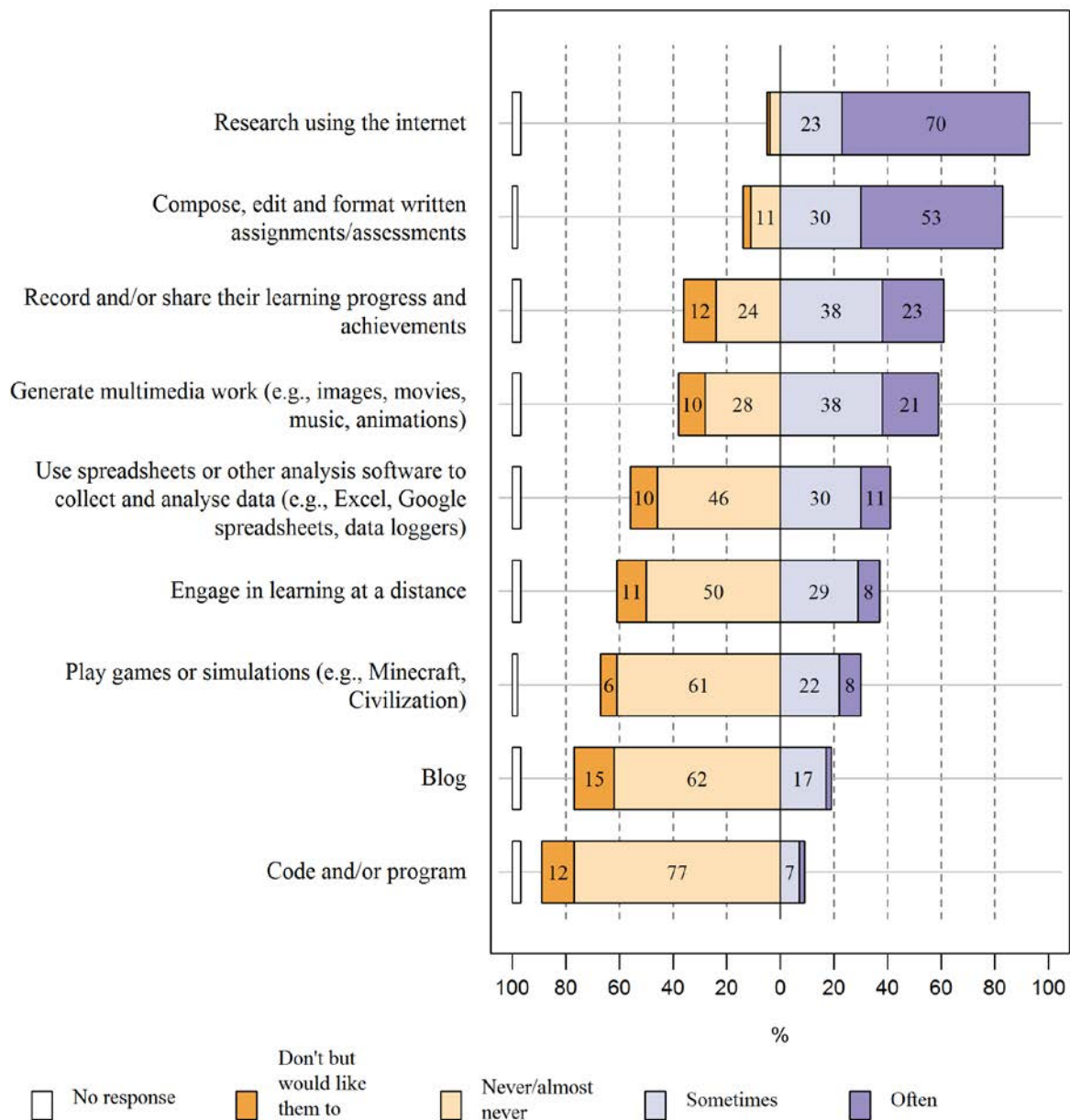
## Providing learning experiences with digital technology

Teachers responded to a set of statements to indicate the sorts of learning experiences they were providing in their classes that involved digital technology. While this gives a broad picture of the opportunities students have for learning with digital technology, it does not tell us about the nature of the pedagogy surrounding these practices.

Figure 10 shows teachers' reports of how often students used digital technology for a variety of learning experiences. Using the Internet for research and developing pieces of written work were the most frequent learning experiences, and probably two of the most well-established uses of digital technology. Least frequent practices were coding or programming and blogging.

Since 2012, the proportion of teachers indicating their students sometimes or often use spreadsheets or other analysis software to collect and analyse data had decreased noticeably from 65% to 41% in 2015. The proportion of teachers reporting their students sometimes or often generate multimedia work increased from 48% in 2012 to 59%. There seem to be no obvious explanations for these changes.

FIGURE 10 Learning experiences using digital technology, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)



The only clear decile-related association here was that teachers at decile 1–2 schools were more likely to report their students playing games or simulations (45% responded “often” or “sometimes”, compared with around 30% for all other decile bands).

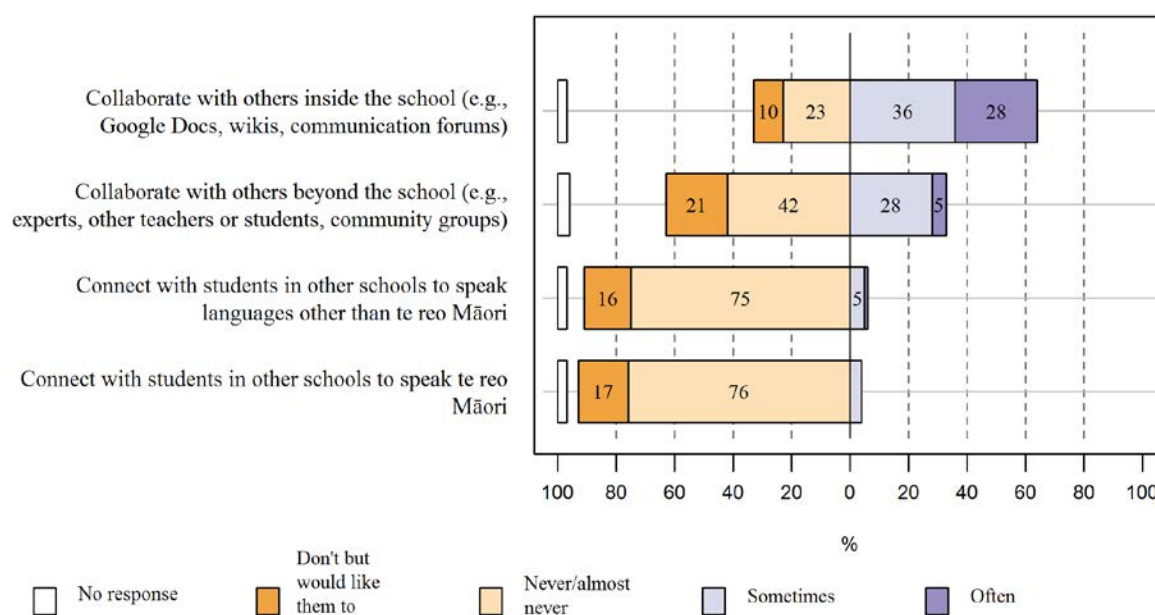
Some unsurprising subject-group differences were evident. Students of English or Languages were most likely to use digital technology to compose, edit and format written assignments/assessments (72%). The subject areas in which students were most likely to sometimes or often use spreadsheets or other analysis software to collect and analyse data were Mathematics and Science (60%). On the other hand, Mathematics and Science students were the least likely to use digital technology to: research using the Internet; produce written assignments; record their learning progress; generate multimedia work; or blog.

According to the 65% of principals who indicated students at their school used distance learning,<sup>33</sup> a median of 5% of students per school used digital technology to engage in learning at a distance (e.g., with an e-teacher). Of this group of principals, 51% said students used VLN for distance learning, 27% used other options (including Te Kura, Google and Office 365) and 8% used online te reo Māori programmes. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and English Language Learning in New Zealand (ELLINZ) were each used for distance learning by 5% or fewer schools using distance learning. Seven percent of this group of principals did not specify the online platforms their students were using.

The use of digital technology for distance learning was associated with school size. Thirty percent of medium–large and large schools had more than 10% of their students doing this, compared with 13% of smaller schools.

We asked teachers how often students used digital technology for collaborating and connecting with others. We included items about connecting with students in other schools to speak te reo Māori, in particular, to contribute to an overall picture of approaches that are being used to re-vitalise te reo Māori. Nearly two-thirds of teachers reported students using digital technology to collaborate with others at the school, and one-third to collaborate with people beyond the school (see Figure 11). Very little use was being made of digital technology to connect with students in other schools to speak te reo Māori (4%) or other languages (6%). Close to one-fifth of teachers indicated they would like their students to use digital technology to collaborate with others beyond the school, or to connect with other students to speak languages other than English.

FIGURE 11 **Students collaborating and connecting with others using digital technology, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)**



Looking at teachers' responses according to school decile, 59% of those at decile 1–2 schools reported their students using digital technology to collaborate with others inside the school, increasing to 75% for decile 9–10. There was a trend for teachers at decile 1–2 schools to be most likely to indicate they do

33 We cannot tell from the survey whether this means 35% of principals have no students using digital technology for distance learning or whether they might have been uncertain what proportion of students do so.

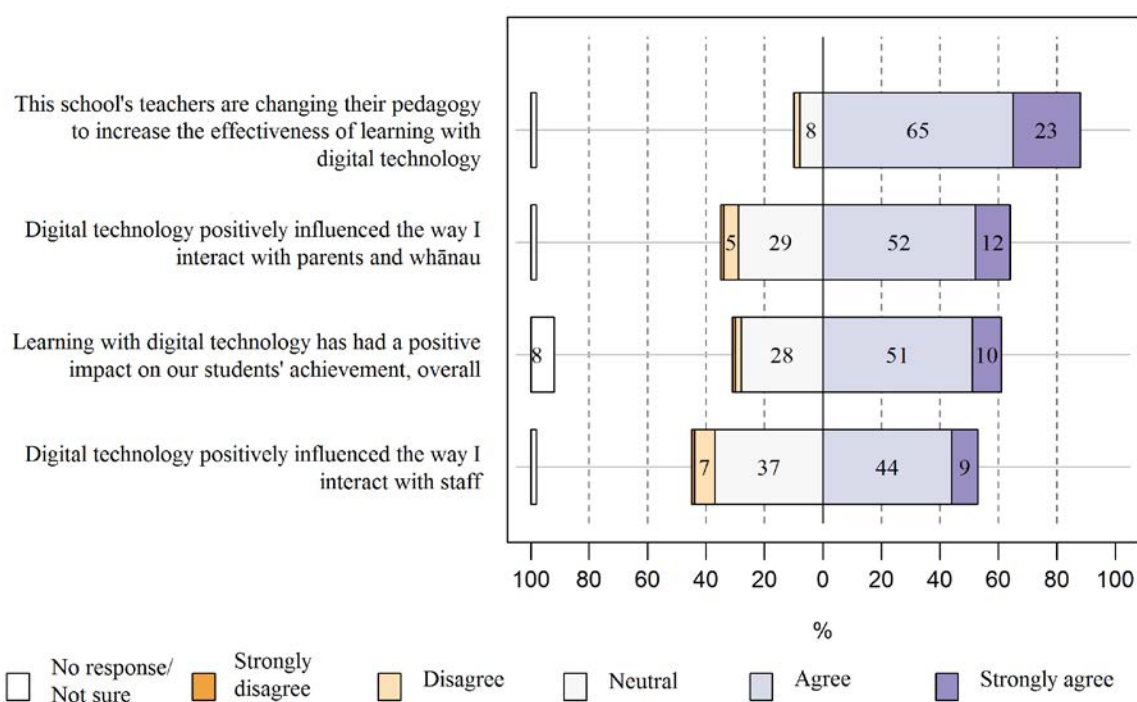
not use digital technology for these purposes, but would like to. For example, 27% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools said they did not use digital technology for their students to connect with students in other schools to speak te reo Māori, but would like to, compared with 14% of those at decile 9–10 schools.

Teachers were also asked how often they use online technologies themselves to collaborate with colleagues in their school and beyond; 85 and 60%, respectively, reported sometimes or often doing so. The nature of what teachers interpreted to be “collaborating” is unknown; for example, these might range from email conversations with another teacher about a student’s learning, to adding comments to an online discussion, to working with several colleagues to develop and revise a joint document online.

### Effects of learning with digital technology

More than half the principals were positive about the effects digital technology was having at their school (see Figure 12). The majority agreed their school’s teachers are changing their pedagogy to get the most out of learning with digital technology. Over half the principals thought that digital technology was positively influencing the way they interact with parents and whānau, and staff. Many also reported a positive impact on students’ achievement.

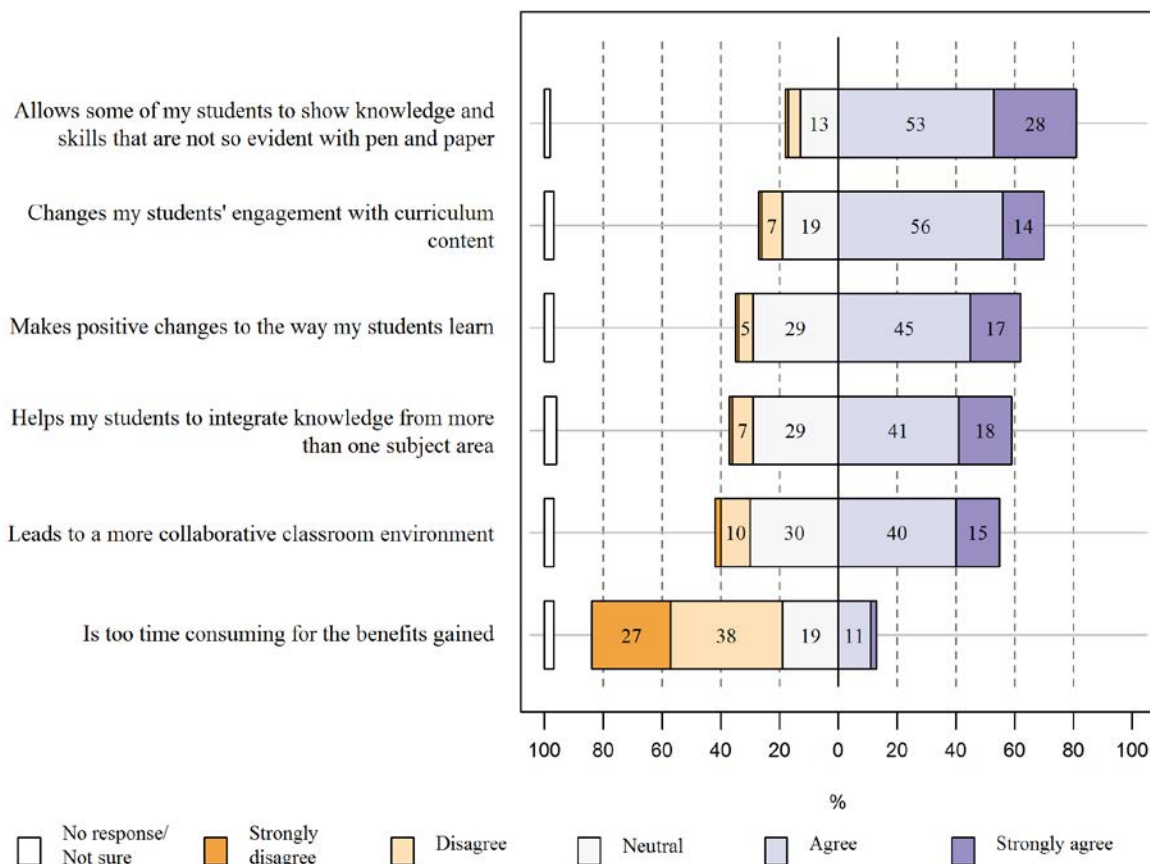
FIGURE 12 Principals’ views of the effects of digital technology at their school (n = 182)



The responses summarised in Figure 13 show that teachers generally also thought that students gained from their use of digital technology. Few thought that using digital technology for learning was too time consuming for the benefits gained.



FIGURE 13 Effects on students of using digital technology for learning, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)

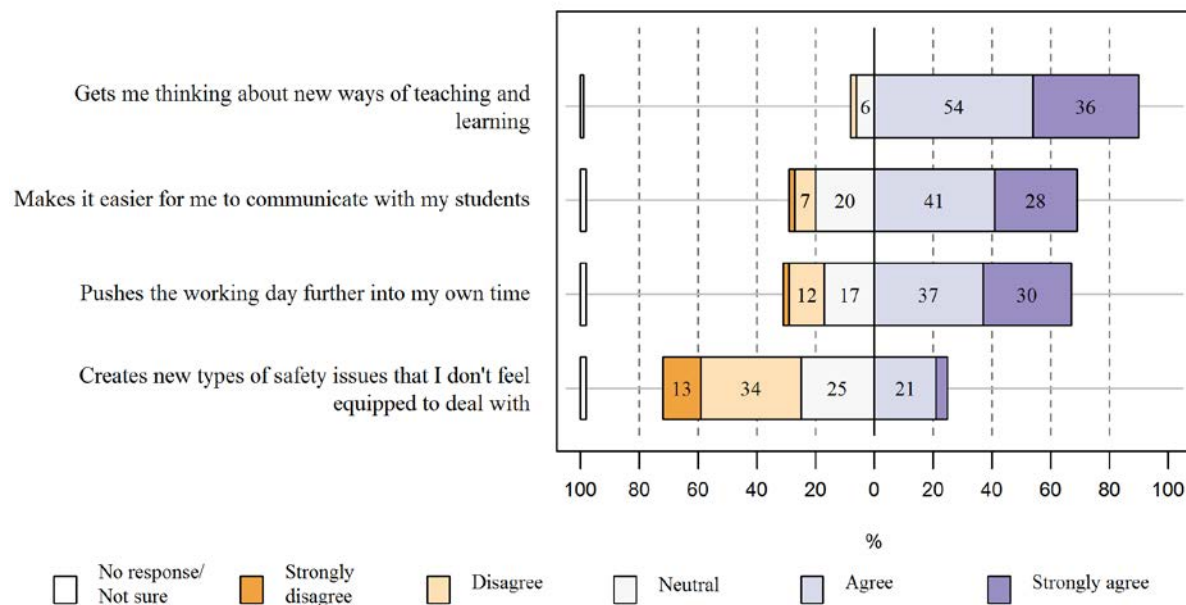


Compared with 2012, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of teachers agreeing that students' use of digital technology helps students to integrate knowledge from multiple subject areas (down from 64% to 59% in 2015). Slightly fewer teachers in 2015 agreed it is too time consuming for the benefits gained (down from 16% to 13%).

Teachers' agreement that digital technology helps students integrate knowledge from more than one subject area was associated with decile; 73% of teachers in decile 1–2 schools agreed, decreasing to 54% of those in decile 9–10 schools.

Students' use of digital technology was getting the majority of teachers thinking about new ways of teaching and learning (see Figure 14). Just over two-thirds of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students using digital technology makes it easier for them to communicate with their students. However, a similar proportion indicated it pushes the working day further into their personal time. This last point was associated with school decile, with 56% of teachers in decile 1–2 schools agreeing or strongly agreeing, increasing to 72% of those in decile 9–10 schools. This difference is probably linked to students at high-decile schools being more likely to generally be more digitally connected.

FIGURE 14 Effects on teachers of using digital technology, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)



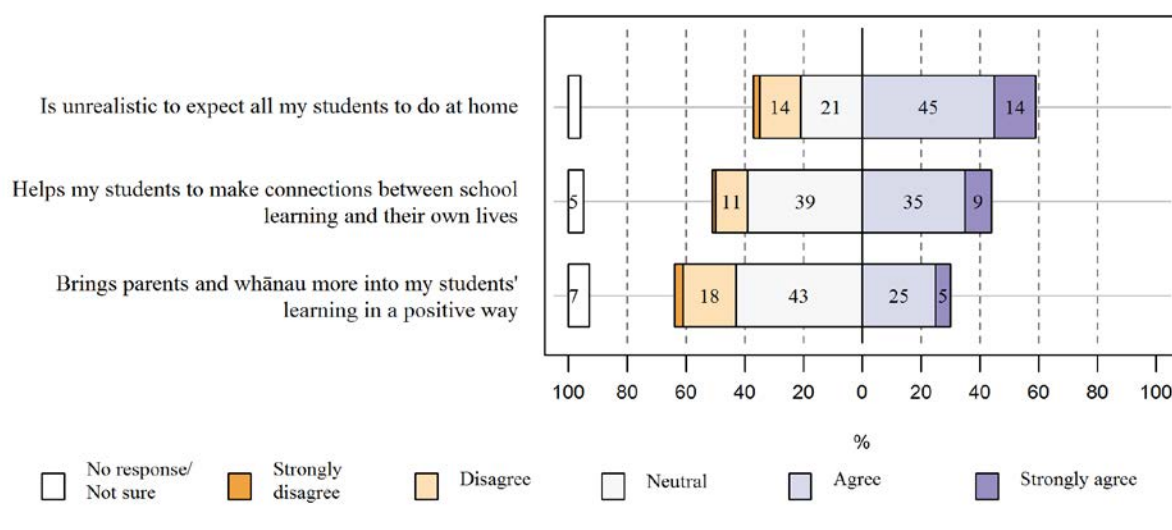
Teachers at high-decile schools were more likely to report new types of safety issues, which they did not feel equipped to deal with, created by students’ use of digital technology (29% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools, decreasing to 20% for those in decile 1–2 schools). However, fewer teachers indicated new safety issues they are not equipped to deal with in 2015 (33% in 2012, compared with 25% in 2015).

There was a slight increase from 2012 in the proportion of teachers who agreed they were thinking about new ways of teaching and learning (83% in 2012, 90% in 2015). Also slightly increased was the proportion who agreed that students using digital technology pushes the working day into their own time (62% in 2012, 67% in 2015).

The teacher survey also included questions about the connections between learning at school and at home. Over half the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that it is unrealistic to expect all their students to use digital technology for learning at home. Less than half agreed or strongly agreed that using digital technology was helping students to make connections between school learning and their own lives, or that it brings parents and whānau more into their students’ learning in a positive way. It is worth noting the comparatively large proportion of neutral responses to two of these items.



FIGURE 15 Effects on home-school connections of using digital technology for learning, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)



### Teachers' comments

Just over half the teachers wrote a comment about their experiences with using digital technology for learning. Although they also made positive comments, more typically, teachers highlighted concerns about using digital technology for learning. Thirty-nine percent of their comments described issues with their school's provision of digital technology for learning. Twenty-eight percent of teachers' comments identified a need for PLD, and more time, to enable them to embed the use of digital technology in their teaching practice. Table 12 shows how their comments were categorised and is followed by illustrative examples, some of which include several themes.

TABLE 12 Teachers' comments about using digital technology for learning

Themes	Teachers (n = 930) %
Issues with school provision of digital technology, technical support and leadership	39
More/better PLD needed, including more time	28
Concerns about negative effects on students' learning and wellbeing of digital technology	18
General positive comment	17
Pedagogical change needed	14
Issues around BYOD and students' access to digital technology at home	13

Teachers' comments about issues with schools' provision of digital technology, technical support and leadership included:

Access to equipment is far too limited. Some subjects are booked/timetabled into computer rooms, which HUGELY restricts access for other classes. I am lucky to get 1 or 2 lessons a term with computers at all.

Need more than 1 computer technician onsite to keep up with 1,200 demands.

Our school is at the beginning of a major overhaul of how we see/use digital technology in the classroom—the plan is to use it widely in all areas of the school; however there does not appear to be a shared goal & no strategic plan as to how to get there! It is rushed & ad hoc.

The following comments are illustrative of what teachers said about the adequacy of PLD, in particular, the time they needed in order to become familiar with technical aspects of digital technology:

Our school has rushed in Office 365 placing too much pressure on staff to upskill without giving them the time to do so. Staff needed time to understand rather than play catch up with the students. I have given up much of my own time to upskilling and learning myself.

More time is needed to be able to learn to use other ways of using digital technology to help with learning. Sometimes students know more about technology than we do and fortunately are often willing to help explain it.

While I am supportive and have set my personal goals around improving my understanding and use of digital technology in my programmes it is extremely hard to find regular time when I can practise it and implement it. It is not enough to do it once because it does not embed it in your normal practice.

Alongside developing technical skills, the need for pedagogical change to get the most out of digital technology for teaching and learning was mentioned in 14% of the teachers' comments:

To be an effective tool rather than a pen/paper replacement I am re-planning each unit as I go i.e., back to a beginning teacher. But this takes a huge amount of time in my evenings to source interactions, etc., that will be meaningful.

It is shifting towards a more student oriented approach to learning, rather than the digital tools alone that is transformative.

Digital technology is only a tool. Used with poor pedagogy it damages learning. Used in the right ways it is a phenomenal tool that enhances resource access, blending with home, and for a range of presentation and activity options.

Eighteen percent of the teachers who made comments voiced concern about negative effects on students' learning and wellbeing of digital technology, with comments such as:

Students are less engaged. It's far too easy for them to have apps/games/other tabs open and alt+tab between them. The students also engage with me, as their teacher, less—they are all just faces looking into screens.

Students' literacy + English abilities decline in grammar, punctuation, literacy and self-expression by having a device that corrects their mistakes without their learning processes input. Depth of knowledge declines.

Seventeen percent of the teachers' comments reflected their positive experiences of learning with digital technology:

I teach low literacy students. iPads are the only device that offers students equal access to the curriculum. An iPad can read to them, text to speech, speech to text, scan and read doc to students, collate their work, organise their thoughts, create videos, record music, create music, spell big words they can think and describe but not write. An iPad with the correct tools/apps and education opens doors.

It is a positive and potentially great tool which has made teaching more efficient and stimulating. There is still a need for thinking skills and learning that D.T. cannot yet fulfil.

Issues related specifically to BYOD were highlighted in comments like these:

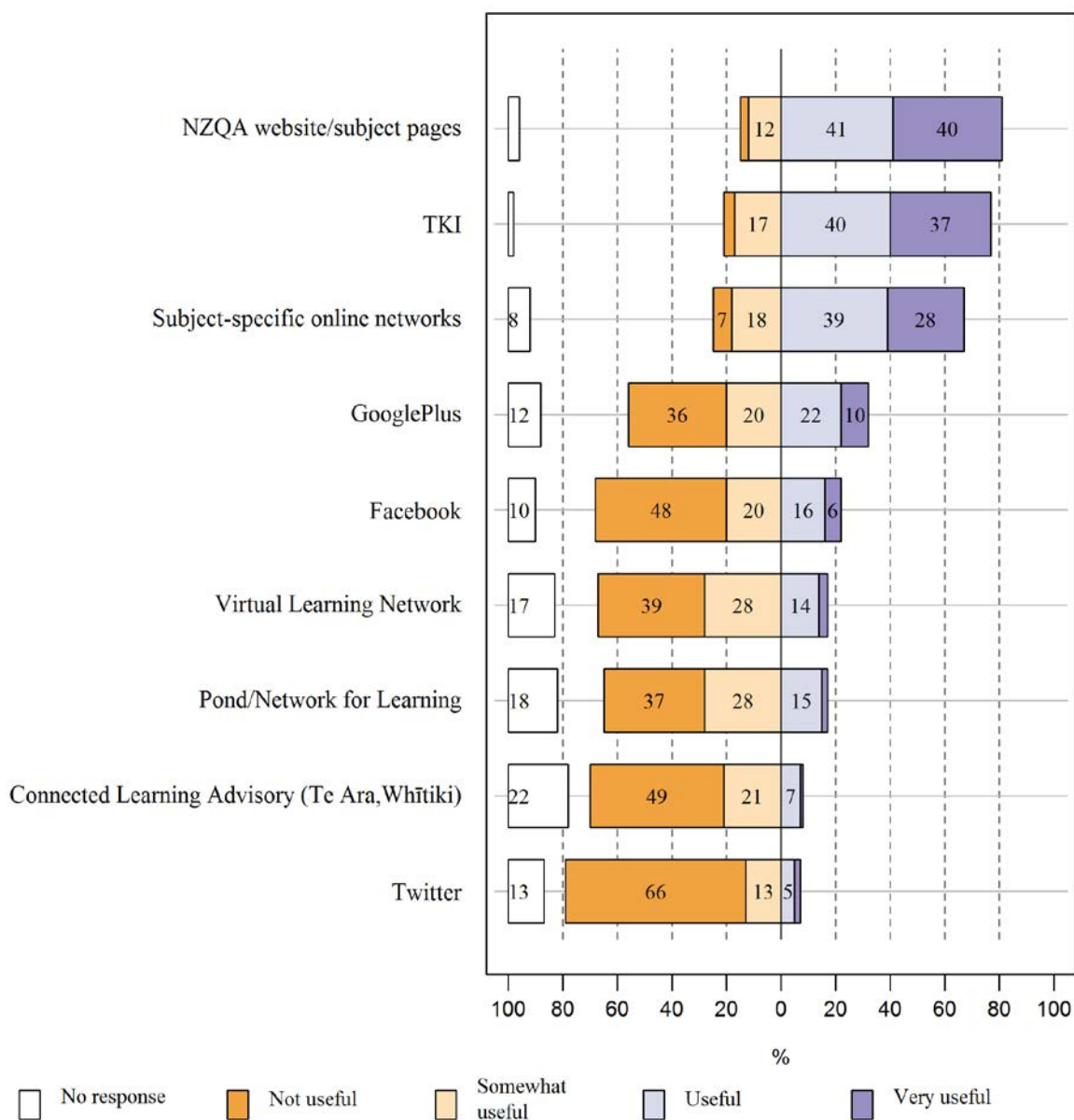
BYOD is great but needs to be communication between intermediate and high school about what devices they are using. iPads ok, but laptops better. Hard for teacher to make sure all they want to do is available on all devices. All iPads or all laptops. Mixture is a nightmare at times.

Not all students are able to BYOD—especially an issue with Pasifika students. Shared devices between siblings, devices confiscated by parents or borrowed by relatives cause disruption to lesson sequences. Many use WIFI at school but have not at home—disrupts homework or collaboration.

### How teachers were using online resources and technologies

When teachers responded to the survey in July/August 2015, the online resources they were finding the most useful to support their teaching were NZQA’s website/subject pages, TKI and subject-specific online networks (see Figure 16). Less than one-fifth of the teachers reported finding other government-funded resources (Virtual Learning Network, Pond/Network for Learning and Connected Learning Advisory) useful. In fact, more than one-third of teachers said they are not useful. Whether this is because teachers have looked at them and judged them not useful, or have not yet used them, is unknown.

FIGURE 16 Teachers’ views of the usefulness of online resources for supporting teaching (n = 1,777)

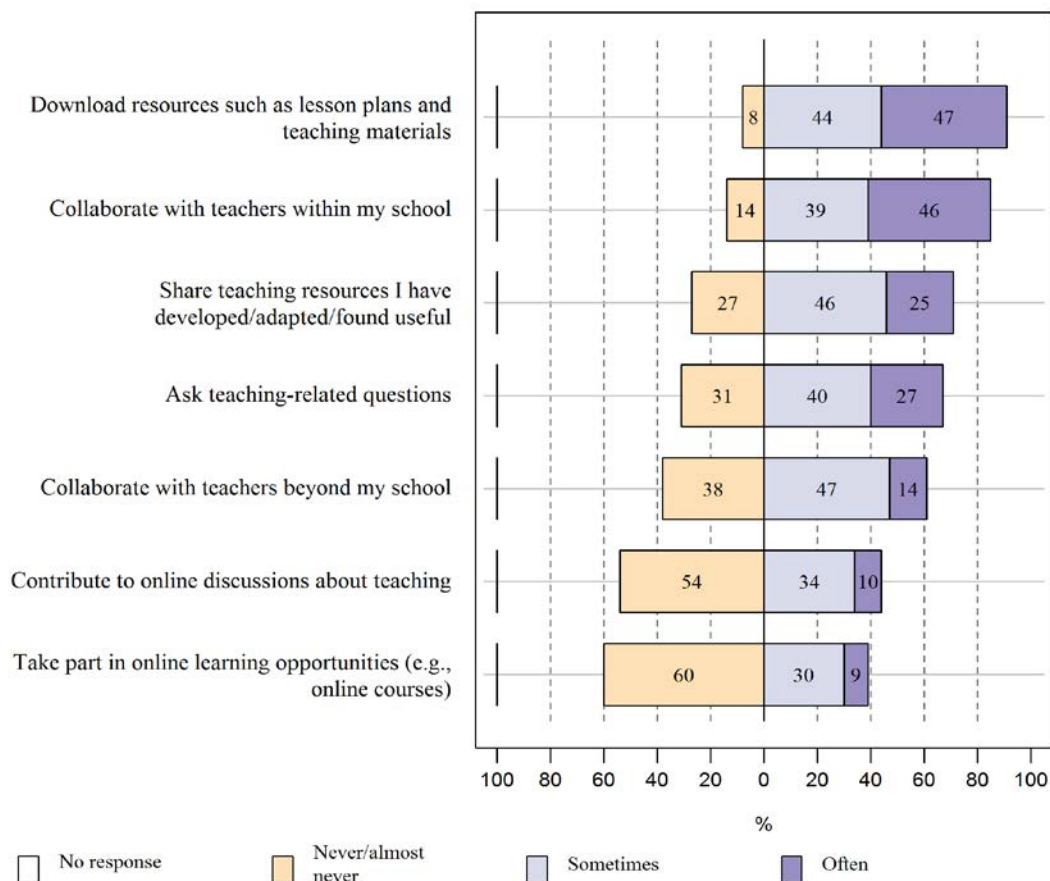


A decile-related difference was evident in teachers' reports that TKI was very useful for supporting teaching (47% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools, decreasing to 33% for decile 7–10). Teachers at low-decile schools were more likely to judge as useful or very useful:

- the Virtual Learning Network (29% for decile 1–2 schools, compared with 14–17% of teachers in schools in other decile bands)
- Pond/Network for Learning (29%, decreasing to 14% of teachers at decile 7–10 schools)
- Facebook (26%, decreasing to 19% of teachers in decile 9–10 schools)
- the Connected Learning Advisory (Te Ara, Whītiki) (14%, decreasing to 6% of teachers in decile 9–10 schools)
- Twitter (12%, decreasing to 5% of teachers in decile 7–8 schools, and 9% in decile 9–10 schools).

So what use were teachers making of online resources? The results summarised in Figure 17 show that they were used often by teachers to download—and to a lesser degree, share—teaching resources, or collaborate with teachers within the same school. Teachers reported less frequent use for activities that involved interacting with others' ideas (apart from those involving colleagues at their school), and online learning. More than half the teachers never or almost never took part in these opportunities or contributed to online discussions about teaching.

FIGURE 17 Teachers' use of online technologies (n = 1,777)



Teachers of Mathematics and Science were the least likely subject group to indicate they collaborated with teachers beyond their school (53%, compared with 66% of teachers of Social Sciences and the Arts—the subject group most likely to do this), or contributed to online discussions about teaching (36%, compared with 53% of teachers of English and Languages).

Teachers also indicated how many people they regularly connected with as part of their professional learning networks (PLN) online. Nearly one-third of teachers did not regularly connect online with anyone as part of their PLN. Just over half reported connecting regularly with up to 20 people and a further 9% with 21 to 50 people. Small percentages of teachers connected regularly with 51 to 100 people, or over 100 people (both figures were 3%). Asking teachers about the number of people with whom they regularly connect online is an indicator that they *do* connect; future surveys might probe the nature of these connections.

In another part of the teacher survey, we asked for their views about their school culture and ways of working (see *Chapter 6: Teachers' perspectives on their work*). There was an association between the frequency with which teachers used online technologies for collaborating with colleagues within their school, and how well they thought ideas were shared in their school. For example, teachers who often used online technologies to collaborate with other teachers in their school were more likely to rate as good or very good the quality of sharing ideas for how to help students improve their performance (76%, decreasing to 52% for teachers who reported never using online technologies to collaborate with their colleagues).

## Parent and whānau views of learning with digital technology

When reading this section, it is important to keep in mind that there was an over-representation in the parent and whānau sample of those whose children attended decile 6–10 schools, which the principal and teacher responses show have higher ICT use. We asked what was important for their child's education and 55% of parents and whānau rated opportunities for learning with digital technology to be of high importance. For 8%, digital technology opportunities had helped them choose their child's secondary school.

Seventy percent of parents and whānau reported their child's school had a BYOD policy, and 10% said it did not (a further 19% were unsure). Of this 70%, the majority of parents (79%) had bought a digital device for their child. Fifteen percent of parents with a child at a BYOD school had not bought devices, and indicated the school provided a device for students who didn't have one.

There were some decile-related differences. Thirteen percent of parents and whānau with children at decile 1–2 schools indicated the school has a BYOD policy, increasing to 79% for decile 7–8, and 69% for decile 9–10. Parents with children at decile 1–2 schools were less likely to have bought their child a digital device (13% had), compared with 65% for decile 5–10 schools. Instead, they were more likely to respond that they have not bought a device and their school has devices for students to use if they don't have one (39% of parents and whānau with children at decile 1–2 schools, compared with 15% for decile 9–10). Twenty-three percent of parents and whānau with children at decile 1–2 schools identified the adequacy of digital technology and Internet access as a major issue for the school, compared with 16% of parents with children at decile 9–10 schools.

At the end of their questionnaire, parents and whānau were invited to make a comment about their youngest child's schooling. The very small number (1%) of parents who commented about digital technology made consistently negative comments, such as:

The introduction of BYOD was problematic. Children are under-prepared for timed rests. There are no 'physical' books to study from. I think kids should be given the option of digital or non-digital learning. Buying a device was difficult for us due to cost, we opted for a tablet. Teachers and technology dept not prepared for problems encountered. In private discussions, some teachers anti BYOD. No parent/school consultation/info evenings on BYOD.

Currently only select groups of students have real access to learning with digital technologies. Students using digital tech are only really using it to replace pen and paper. No deeper engagement is happening.

Most contributing primary schools operate with Google Apps for Education, then they go to college and that learning is not supported. Currently they seem to be a lot of bullying, smoking and even drug use.

... we are a lower socio-eco family and cannot afford Internet at home. Therefore my son cannot do homework/revision ... That is dependent on access to the Internet. This is also prevented as we live in the country so he cannot access the Internet on school grounds after school as he has to race to the bus. Thus he has missed out on so much compared to those who have Internet at home. The end result is he will be behind in his studies, unfairly so. This will be an even bigger problem as he advances in years at college.

We feel we have been forced into buying a device for BYOD that doesn't appear to have improved our child's learning in any way.

### Trustees' perspectives

Over half the trustees (55%) felt that one of their board's main achievements over the past year was more use of digital technology in learning—an increase from 42% in 2012. Also over the past year, 15% of trustees reported their board had consulted its community about the use of digital technology, and slightly fewer (11%) indicated parents and whānau had raised ICT-related issues with their board. Twelve percent of trustees thought their board needed more experience related to digital technology, and 9% thought their board needed external support and advice in this area.

### Summary and discussion

Many of the questions we asked about learning with digital technology were new in 2015, and were intended to provide baseline information against which we can map future change in secondary schools. Looking at the overall picture in 2015, there is evidence that the government provision for strengthening schools' use of digital technology has generally improved the adequacy of schools' digital technology and Internet access since the previous survey in 2012, although issues related to Internet access and reliability of equipment remained for a significant minority of schools. Most schools (62%) had BYOD policies and, as we will see in *Chapter 10: School resources and viability*, more than half of secondary schools relied on parent provision of digital devices.

However, disparities are evident in students' access to digital technology for learning. In a low-decile school, students are likely to be sharing devices which will be available for limited courses. The school-owned devices are more likely to be unreliable and inadequately supported, and these students were less digitally connected. These conditions will prevent students from taking up opportunities to use digital technology for learning at the same rate as those at high-decile schools.

However, we do not want to overlook the challenges facing some high-decile schools. As we will see in *Chapter 10: School resources and viability*, nearly half of decile 9–10 schools were reliant on parents and whānau to be able to provide digital devices for students. This is likely to be resulting in some within-school inequalities. Although more teachers in high-decile schools had good technical support, around a third did not, and a significant majority did not feel enabled by their school to develop the knowledge and skills they need to provide learning with digital technology.

The restricted access in low-decile schools also affects teachers; it will probably mean teachers are unable to make the pedagogical shifts needed to capitalise on the learning opportunities afforded by digital technology. Teachers at these schools are, however, less likely to find that using digital technology pushes their working day further into their own time.

Another issue for teachers was that they felt they needed more professional learning and development to keep their knowledge up to date, with some already feeling left behind. In teachers' comments,

there was a theme of needing time to practise and experiment for themselves before feeling ready to incorporate aspects of digital technology into their daily pedagogy. Finding time to do this within current workloads seemed unrealistic, from teachers' perspectives.

Teachers and principals were generally positive about the gains for students' learning with digital technology. The reported uptake of online opportunities for students to participate in distance learning or e-learning was relatively low.

Working with the data relating to digital technology has highlighted areas to probe in future national surveys. The main area that warrants closer examination is the extent to which the use of digital technology for learning is being accompanied by changes in teachers' pedagogy. From the responses to the teacher questionnaire, we cannot say whether digital technology is being used instrumentally—as a tool to make learning activities that were previously done in other ways, more engaging and time-efficient—or if pedagogical shifts are meaning that digital technology is having a transformative effect on students' learning. Certainly, most teachers are thinking about new ways of teaching and learning, but what is actually changing is less clear.



## 5.

# Supporting students' wellbeing<sup>34</sup>

**There are strong links between a student's mental and emotional wellbeing, their social behaviour and learning outcomes. Supporting students' wellbeing and social development goes hand in hand with meeting academic goals.<sup>35</sup> An awareness of these links is important as this can help improve support for students with mental health issues.**

Mental health problems can surface in behaviour that is disruptive in a classroom. Disruptive behaviour can be an obstacle to students achieving their academic potential, and is increasingly associated with poorer academic outcomes as students grow older.

In the national survey we asked questions that relate to each of the three tiers of the intervention or proactive triangle shown in Figure 18. The triangle is based on a public health approach to prevention. Those who explore effective ways of managing student behaviour<sup>36</sup> and those who advocate for social and emotional learning as a way of building mental health and addressing problem behaviours<sup>37, 38</sup> offer

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34 Sally Boyd contributed substantially to this chapter. She is the leader of the NZCER evaluation of PB4L School-wide: Boyd, S., & Felgate, R. (2015). *"A positive culture of support": Final report from the evaluation of PB4L School-wide*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Sally also led the development of the *Wellbeing@School* survey, which the Ministry of Education funded to support schools (see <http://www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/>).

35 For example, Anderson, S. (2005). The relationship between student psychological wellbeing, behaviour and educational outcomes: A lesson from the MindMattersPlus demonstration schools. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 15(2), 235-240.

36 Chafouleas, S., Riley-Tillman, T., & Sugai, G. (2007). *School-based behavioral assessment: Informing intervention and instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press.

37 CASEL. (2008). *Social and emotional learning (SEL) and student benefits: Implications for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students core elements*. Washington DC: National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, Education Development Center.

38 Merrell, K., & Guedner, B. (2010). *Social and emotional learning in the classroom: Promoting mental health and academic success*. New York: The Guilford Press.

the intervention triangle as a point of reference for making decisions about what emphasis might be placed on different types of activities. The intervention triangle has also been used in New Zealand in the implementation of the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) suite of initiatives.<sup>39</sup>

FIGURE 18 **The intervention triangle: Planning to promote wellbeing**

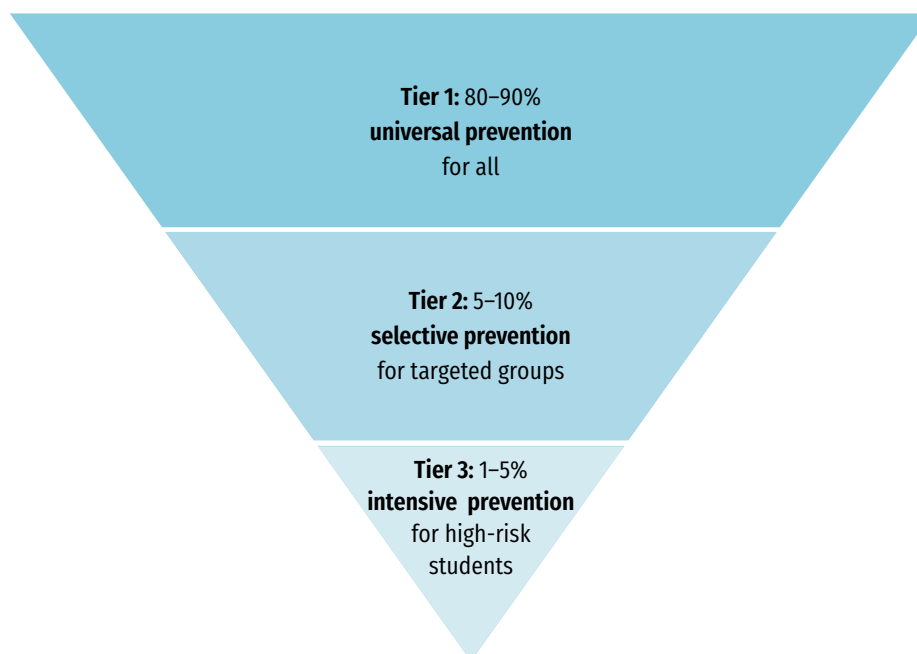


Diagram adapted by Boyd<sup>40</sup> to suit a New Zealand context from CASEL<sup>41</sup> and Chafouleas et al.<sup>42</sup>

The three tiers of the intervention triangle are differentiated by the nature of the intervention and the group or individuals who are the focus. An underpinning principle is that not all effort to support wellbeing and mental health should be directed at individuals, as this ignores the group context of behaviours. In the triangle, most effort (80–90%) is invested in prevention that is universal and therefore targeted at the whole school or all students. PB4L School-Wide is an example of a Tier 1 universal initiative.

Schools using proactive approaches can be strategic and deliberate about supporting students by having some approaches at all three tiers. Such approaches might include:

- Tier 1, universal prevention: a mix of proactive universal approaches aimed at all students to assist in building wellbeing (e.g., PB4L School-Wide (first layer), planned social and emotional learning for all students, activities that build belonging at school)
- Tier 2, selective prevention: small group targeted approaches for those with extra needs (e.g., support groups, Year 9 Travellers screening assessment)
- Tier 3, intensive prevention: intensive approaches for crises and students with very high support needs (e.g., mentoring, counselling and other forms of individual specialist support).

39 For more information about PB4L, see <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/>

40 Boyd, S. (2012). *Wellbeing@School: Building a safe and caring school climate that deters bullying overview paper*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

41 CASEL. (2008). *Social and emotional learning (SEL) and student benefits: Implications for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students core elements*. Washington DC: National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, Education Development Center.

42 Chafouleas, S., Riley-Tillman, T., & Sugai, G. (2007). *School-based behavioral assessment: Informing intervention and instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Our questions were largely about proactive approaches schools were taking to support students' wellbeing. For example, we asked about opportunities schools provided for students to contribute to the school community and the extent to which schools monitored students' uptake of such opportunities (a Tier 1 approach). We also asked about how well embedded support groups for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth were (a Tier 2 approach). Recognising that there are instances when it may be beyond a school's capacity to provide effective support for a student's mental health issues, we asked about principals' and teachers' experiences of working with external agencies to which they can refer high-risk students (part of Tier 3).

Proactive approaches can strengthen protective factors that “enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes and lessen the likelihood of negative consequences from exposure to risk”.<sup>43</sup> Protective factors at the system, school, classroom and individual student levels can help students build skills and competencies to manage the risk factors associated with students' psychological wellbeing and behaviour. Protective factors that can enhance students' wellbeing include a sense of belonging and being socially connected, having access to health support and having strategies to cope with difficulties and failure. For students with emotional or behavioural problems, establishing protective factors at all levels is important, with individualised support also an essential component for students with high needs. We were also interested to see what proactive approaches secondary schools were taking to enhance protective factors for students' mental and emotional wellbeing, social skills and engagement with school.

Since the last national NZCER secondary survey in 2012, there have been new initiatives in New Zealand to support secondary school students' wellbeing. The Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project was launched in 2012. This collaborative initiative involves the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development, and Te Puni Kōkiri. The Youth Mental Health Project co-funds 26 different initiatives—a number of which are delivered in schools or target school-aged students (e.g., PB4L School-Wide for secondary schools; SPARX—a free online tool for young people; and mentors for students). There has also been considerable resource development in related areas, including publications to help with issues of youth suicide,<sup>44</sup> bullying behaviour<sup>45</sup> and mental health.<sup>46</sup> In addition, a 2012 memorandum of understanding formalised an intention between the Ministry of Education and CYF to work collaboratively to ensure the safety of vulnerable children and young people, and to help them succeed educationally.

In 2013, with funding from the Youth Mental Health Project, ERO published a draft set of indicators for student wellbeing,<sup>47</sup> which were then used in a national evaluation of how wellbeing was promoted in schools. The subsequent ERO (2015) report<sup>48</sup> on wellbeing of secondary students identified 16% of the 68 secondary schools sampled had cohesive systems for promoting and responding to student wellbeing,

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43 World Health Organisation. (2004). *FINAL DRAFT—March 2004 1 Chapter 4: Determinants (risk and protective factors) indicators*. Retrieved 4 April 2016, from [http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/me/en/me\\_prev\\_ch4.pdf](http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/me/en/me_prev_ch4.pdf)

44 Ministry of Education. (2013). *Preventing and responding to suicide: Resource kit for schools*. Retrieved 11 March 2016, from <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Traumatic-incidents-and-emergencies/SuicidePreventionOCT2013.pdf>

45 Ministry of Education. (2015). *Bullying prevention and response: A guide for schools*. Retrieved 11 March 2016, from <http://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/student-wellbeing/bullying-prevention-and-response/bullying-prevention-and-response-a-guide-for-schools/>

46 Ministry of Social Development on behalf of The Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project. (2015). *Guidelines: Supporting young people with stress, anxiety and/or depression*. Retrieved 11 March 2016, from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/brochures/guidelines.html>

47 Education Review Office. (2013). *Wellbeing for success: Draft evaluation indicators for student wellbeing (draft) 2013*. Retrieved 2 March 2016, from <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/Wellbeing-for-Success>

48 Education Review Office. (2015). *Wellbeing for young people's success at secondary school*. Retrieved 2 March 2016, from <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Wellbeing-for-Young-People-s-Success-at-Secondary-School-February-2015>

and a further 57% had some good practices in place. Twenty-six percent of this group of schools were facing major challenges that impacted on their ability to promote student wellbeing. The report made a number of recommendations, including that schools: deliberately map and review the opportunities students have to explore wellbeing issues and develop key competencies and leadership skills; review students' assessment workloads; and involve students more in decisions that affect them at school.

In this chapter, we begin with the overall picture of student behaviour in schools, then look at teacher reports of the proactive behaviour approaches used in their school. Then we look at principals' reports of how their school gathers information on student engagement, behaviour and wellbeing and whether these aspects were reflected in annual plan targets. Later in the chapter, the views of parents and whānau and school trustees are included.

Some of the following sections describe approaches that might be used at multiple tiers of the intervention triangle; where appropriate, we indicate in which tier an approach was likely to fit.

## Supporting students' social behaviour is improving

In 2015, students' behaviour was much less of a major issue for schools than it had been in 2012 and 2009. This suggests that the emphasis and support given around student behaviour and engagement in the past few years is paying off. Table 13 gives the details, and also shows that student behaviour remained a major issue for people in decile 1–2 schools, especially teachers.

TABLE 13 **Student behaviour as a major issue facing their school, 2015, 2012 and 2009; school decile differences**

	All schools 2015 (2012, 2009) %	Decile 1–2 schools 2015* (2012, 2009) %	Decile 9–10 schools 2015 (2012, 2009) %
Principals	15 (26, 33)	40 (45, 50)	0 (9, 7)
Teachers	27 (44, 48)	64 (65, 70)	4 (24, 21)
Trustees	11 (27, 37)	26 (56, 44)	3 (4, 12)
Parents and whānau	21 (38, 37)	59* (39, 44)	13 (40, 24)

\* In each case, the 2015 percentage for decile 1–2 schools decreased gradually to the figure shown for decile 9–10 schools.

+ This percentage represents responses from 39 parents and whānau, and should be interpreted cautiously.

While student behaviour has generally improved, 37% of the teachers sometimes had their teaching seriously disrupted by students' behaviour, slightly down from 41% in 2012 and 45% in 2009. Eleven percent of teachers indicated this happened often, down from 18% in 2012 and 16% in 2009.

Serious disruption to teaching was experienced *often* by 27% of teachers at decile 1–2 schools (decreasing to less than 2% at decile 9–10 schools). One of the main things teachers at decile 1–2 schools would like to change about their work as a teacher is to have more support for them to teach students with behaviour issues (34%, decreasing to 9% of teachers at decile 9–10 schools).

How schools deal with disruptive behaviour was of concern to some parents and whānau, who made comments like this one:

There needs to be more support around behaviour issues. Children excluded from other schools can change the whole culture of a settled, well-functioning class, and create a high level of stress for teachers and children wanting to learn.

## Proactive approaches to enhancing protective factors

### School-wide protective factors (Tier 1)

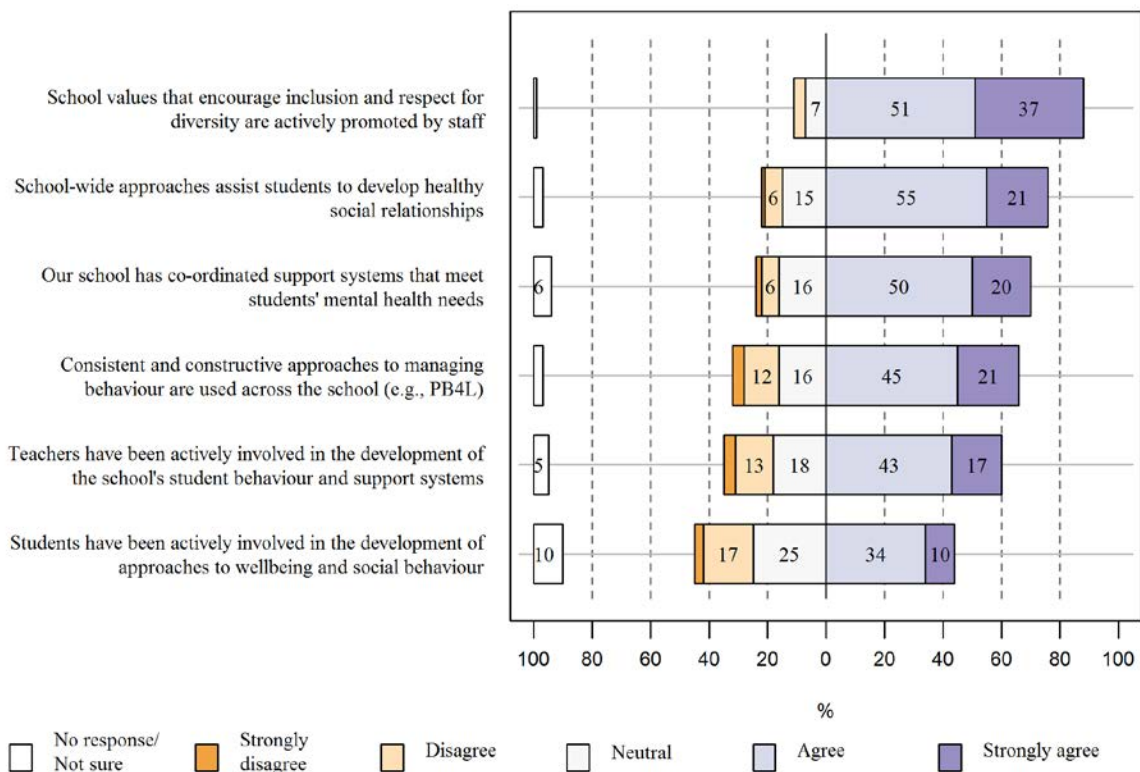
Helping students maintain or strengthen their wellbeing over the initial transition to secondary school is important. Most principals (91%) and teachers (78%) agreed they have deliberate strategies in place at their school to build Years 9 and 10 students' sense of belonging. Nearly three-quarters of principals agreed they get good information about their students' non-academic strengths and needs when they enter the school. A rather lower 39% of teachers agreed with this.

Teachers were asked about school-wide approaches that support students' wellbeing (see Figure 19). More than three-quarters agreed the school staff actively promoted school values that encourage inclusion and respect for diversity, and that they had school-wide approaches to assist students to develop healthy social relationships.

Actively involving staff and students in developing student behaviour and support systems creates belonging and ownership. This was less common practice across schools.

Within overall school-wide approaches, schools can also target groups of students with particular needs. Slightly fewer teachers agreed their school has co-ordinated support systems that meet students' mental health needs (Tiers 2 and 3).

FIGURE 19 School-wide approaches to supporting students' wellbeing, reported by teachers (n = 1,777)



Compared with 2012, slightly fewer teachers agreed that school-wide approaches assisted students to develop healthy social relationships (76%, compared with 81% in 2012). The proportion who reported their school has co-ordinated support systems that meet students' mental health needs was 70%, compared with 72% in 2012. This lack of increase suggests that recent initiatives in the Youth Mental Health package have yet to gain traction in some secondary schools.

Teacher involvement in developing their school's student behaviour and support systems was linked to their role, ranging from 54% of subject teachers to 62% of heads of department and 84% of those in AP/DP roles.

Students were reported by 44% of the teachers to have been involved in developing approaches to wellbeing and social behaviour in their school. Teachers at smaller schools were more likely than those at large secondary schools to report students having an active role in this.

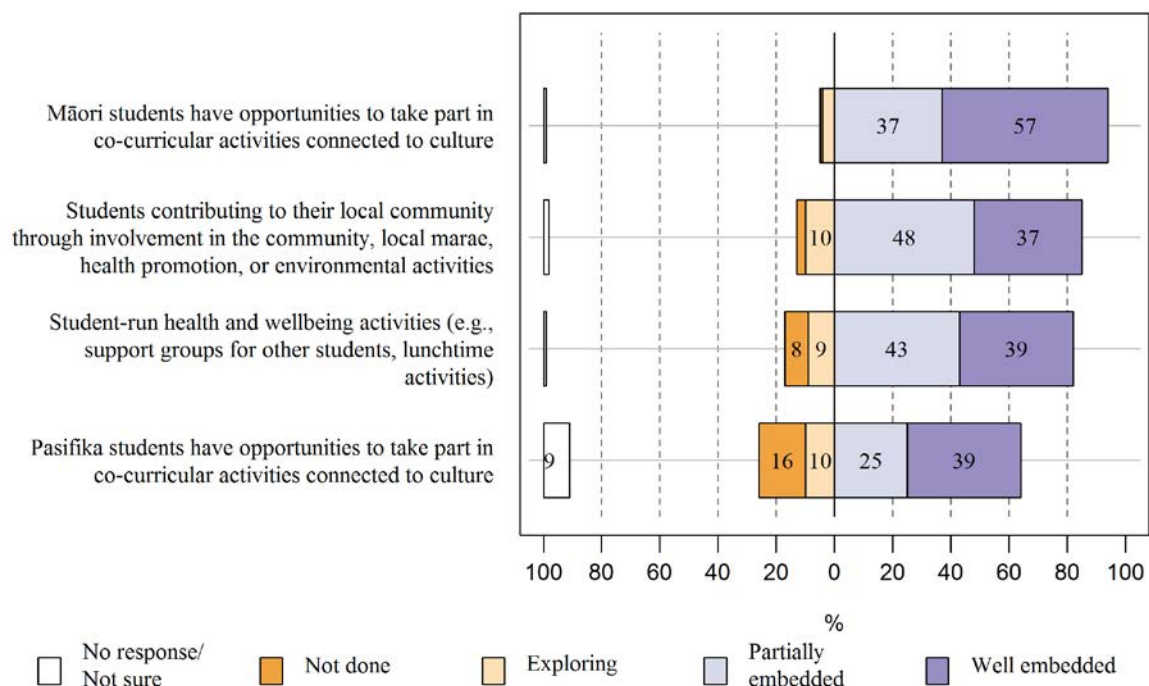
### **Belonging, contributing and participating (Tier 1)**

One protective factor that can enhance students' wellbeing is a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging can be created through providing opportunities for students to be socially or culturally connected at school.

Most principals indicated that approaches were partially or well embedded at their school to ensure Māori students were provided with opportunities to take part in co-curricular activities connected to their culture (see Figure 20). Just under two-thirds indicated an equivalent approach for Pasifika students was at least partially embedded.

The majority of principals (85%) reported students at their school contributing through involvement in the community, local marae, health promotion or environmental activities. Most schools also have students involved in running health and wellbeing groups and activities for their peers. These two approaches were more likely to be partially embedded than well embedded.

FIGURE 20 Opportunities for students to contribute, reported by principals (n = 182)



The only decile-related difference was that principals at decile 5–6 schools were less likely to indicate their schools had embedded approaches to students contributing to their local community (74%, compared with 97% at decile 9–10 schools, and 82–88% for other decile bands).

Metropolitan school principals reported more of these opportunities embedded at their schools than those in other locations. Overlapping somewhat, more principals of large schools reported embedded opportunities for Māori and Pasifika students to take part in co-curricular activities connected to their cultures (100% and 89%, respectively, compared with 71% and 14% for small schools).

Fewer schools had well-embedded monitoring of data to ensure all students took part in at least one co-curricular or community service activity (23%, with another 34% having this monitoring partially embedded).

## The role of data, monitoring and targets to support student wellbeing and behaviour

Most secondary schools tracked student absence, behaviour incidents and student views on the school climate and culture over time. Somewhat more secondary schools were now tracking student engagement and belonging at the school. Just under half tracked student health.

Table 14 shows 2015 and 2012 patterns.



TABLE 14 Student engagement and wellbeing data collected and tracked over time; principals' responses in 2012 and 2015

Type of data	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Student absence/truancy	96	92
Behaviour incident data	89	89
Student views on school climate and culture	74	81
Survey of student engagement or sense of belonging at school	67	76
Health (e.g., illness, school sores/impetigo, dental records)	49	45
Other	14	6

Setting targets for students' engagement, behaviour and wellbeing is a proactive approach some schools were taking. Ten percent reported they had no targets of this nature (much the same as the 12% in 2012). Table 15 shows that nearly two-thirds said their school's 2015 annual plan included a target related to student engagement in learning and school, slightly less than in 2012. Over half the schools had targets related to students' attendance, with fewer than in 2012 targeting the reduction of student absence/truancy. Just under a third sought to build students' social and emotional competencies and wellbeing.

TABLE 15 Student engagement and wellbeing targets in annual plans; principals' responses in 2012 and 2015

Engagement and wellbeing targets	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Related to student engagement in learning and school	70	64
Attendance-related	52	56
Reduction of student absence/truancy	36	31
Building students' social and emotional competencies and wellbeing	*	31
Reduction of behaviour incidents	24	26
Reduction in stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions	24	21
Health-related	6	10
Other	7	4

\*Not asked

There were distinct decile-related differences in schools' targets. Principals of decile 3–4 schools were the most likely to have targets for student engagement and wellbeing, decreasing to those at decile 9–10 schools. Decile 3–4 schools were also the most likely to have annual targets focused on attendance, reducing absence/truancy, reducing behaviour incidents and stand-downs, suspensions and expulsions. Twenty-seven percent of decile 7–8 schools had no targets relating to student engagement and wellbeing, as did 17% of decile 9–10 schools. Targets did not vary significantly according to school size.

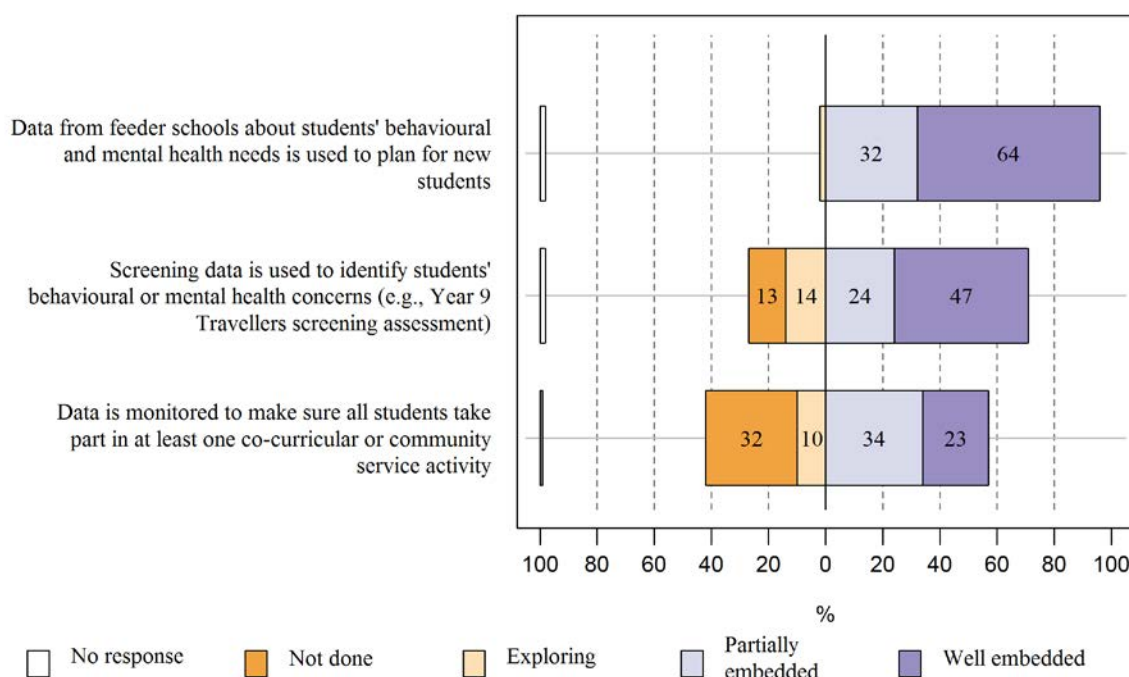
TABLE 16 Student engagement and wellbeing targets in annual plans; differences in principals' responses associated with school decile

	Decile 1-2 schools %	Decile 3-4 schools %	Decile 5-6 schools %	Decile 7-8 schools %	Decile 9-10 schools %
Attendance-related	70	71	64	41	31
Reduction of absence/truancy	35	50	34	24	11
Reduction of behaviour incidents	25	48	26	24	3
Health-related	25	14	2	6	14
Reduction in stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions	20	38	22	15	6
No targets related to	5	5	2	27	17

### Other uses of student data to support wellbeing

Just under two-thirds of the principals reported that they used data from their feeder schools about behaviour and mental health needs to plan for their incoming students, with fewer having well-embedded screening data to identify students' behavioural or mental health concerns. Less well embedded in secondary schools was the use of screening data to identify students whose behaviour, wellbeing or mental health might be at risk (Tiers 2 and 3); or the monitoring of data to ensure all students took part in co-curricular activities (Tier 1).

FIGURE 21 Use of student data to support their mental health, behaviour and participation; principals' views (n = 182)



Sixty-four percent of teachers agreed they can readily access class data that help them notice trends and manage behaviour.

## Teaching strategies to support wellbeing (Tier 1)

To find out about teachers' role in developing protective factors at the classroom level, we asked them about whether they taught strategies to help students manage their wellbeing. Just over two-thirds of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they taught strategies in their classes that help students to manage their social and emotional wellbeing; 31% either disagreed or gave a neutral response. Just over half the principals (53%) reported that active teaching in everyday classes of strategies for managing feelings was well or partially embedded at their school. Just over one-quarter of principals (26%) indicated this was not done at their school.

Together, teachers' and principals' responses suggest that the extent this protective factor is planned for varies considerably between schools. Looking at differences associated with subject groups, 78% of teachers in the group that comprises Technology, Health and PE, Transition, Careers and Special Education agreed they taught strategies that help students manage their wellbeing, compared with 58% of those teaching Mathematics and Science classes. Students' wellbeing is explicitly included in the Health and PE learning area curriculum, and is also likely to be a focus in Special Education, whereas it is not an explicit curriculum expectation for the Mathematics and Statistics learning area. There were no differences associated with teachers' roles.

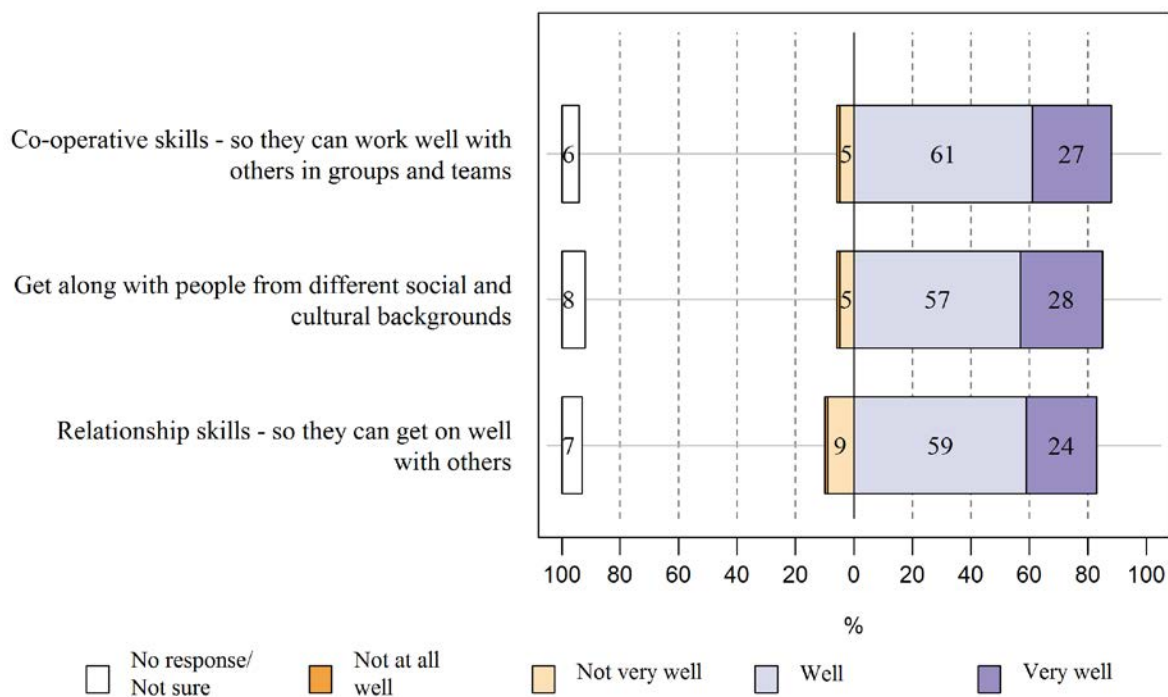
In comments about their work as a teacher, a small number (around 4%) expressed concern about students' wellbeing and learning:

I am very happy but I do think about the very fast pace of life now for students, their anxiety and mental health issues. Most senior students already have part time work to help out their families. We need to take care of our young people.

## Views of parents and whānau

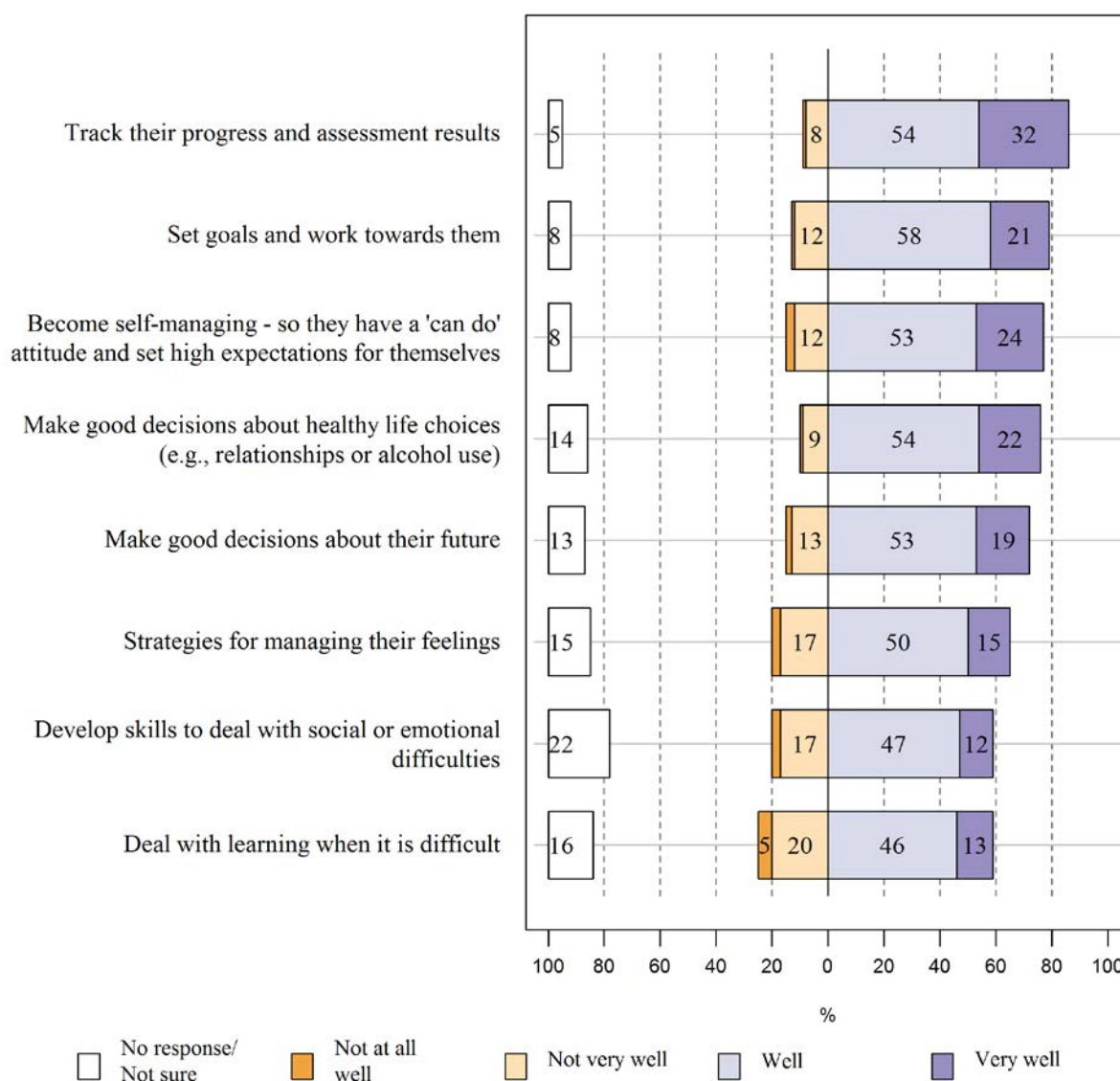
We asked parents and whānau how well their child's school helped them develop relationship and self-management skills. Figure 22 shows that most parents thought their school was doing well or very well in helping their child to develop skills that would help them get along and co-operate with others.

FIGURE 22 Parent and whānau views about how well their school helped their child develop relationship skills (n = 1,242)



Many parents also thought their school was helping their child develop self-management skills, and social and emotional skills that support wellbeing and learning. Figure 23 also shows that there was a little more uncertainty about the school's work here, and a minority of parents and whānau who thought their child's school was not helping them to deal with learning when it was difficult, or skills and strategies around managing feelings and social and emotional difficulties.

FIGURE 23 Parent and whānau views about how well their school helped their child develop self-management skills (n = 1,242)



Most parents and whānau (77%) thought their school was doing well or very well in helping their child develop pride in who they were. Most (81%) also thought the school gave them the opportunity to take part in sport and cultural activities. Just under two-thirds (63%) agreed that their school gave their child leadership opportunities through things like the school council, arts and sport. Over half (53%) thought the school did well or very well in helping their child discover a range of interests and passions.

In the comments parents and whānau wrote at the end of their questionnaires, some voiced their concern about the limited range of co-curricular options for students:

I would like to see a widened focus on sports + funding to include basketball and rugby. Too much focus on rowing + forgetting sports that other parents put hard work into coaching.

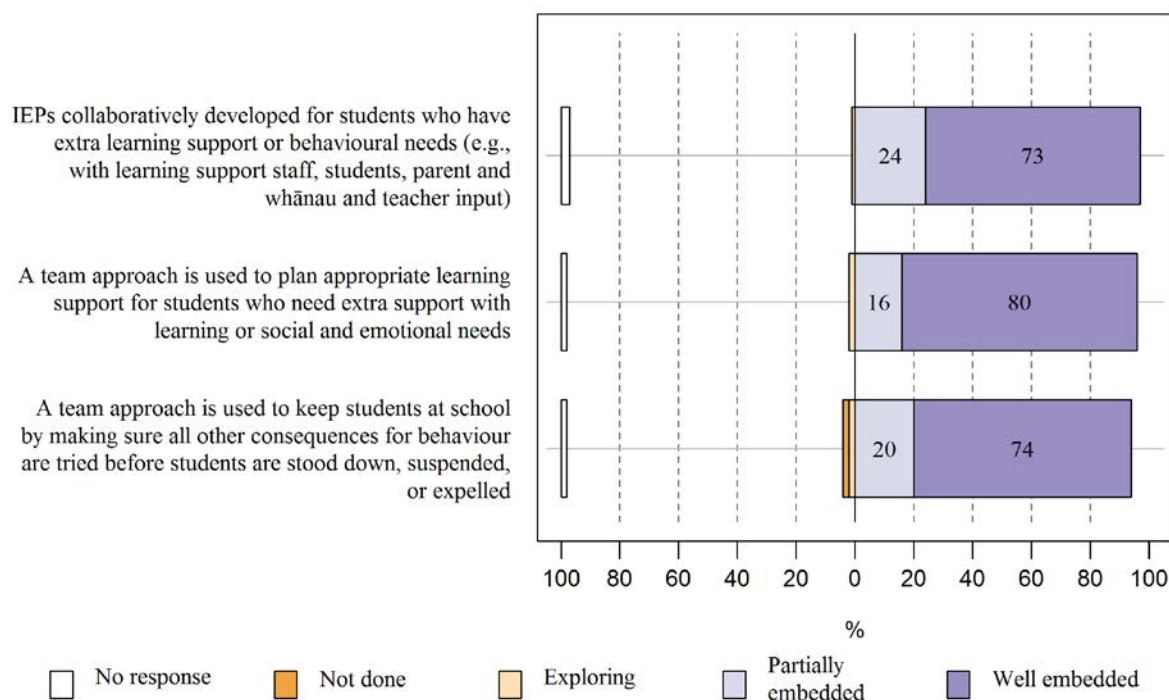
I feel the balance between sport and cultural activities is reflective of a rural community as it is a very sport oriented school. However, the cultural/artistic opportunities are lacking.

More cultural activities!! Not just one required ONE, to keep the families happy. I feel the school is culturally insensitive (just my opinion).

## Extra support for small groups of students (Tier 2)

Almost all principals reported as partially or well embedded several collaborative approaches to identifying and planning for additional wellbeing, behaviour and learning needs (see Figure 24). These collaborations could involve a student's parents and whānau, and might additionally draw on external expertise.

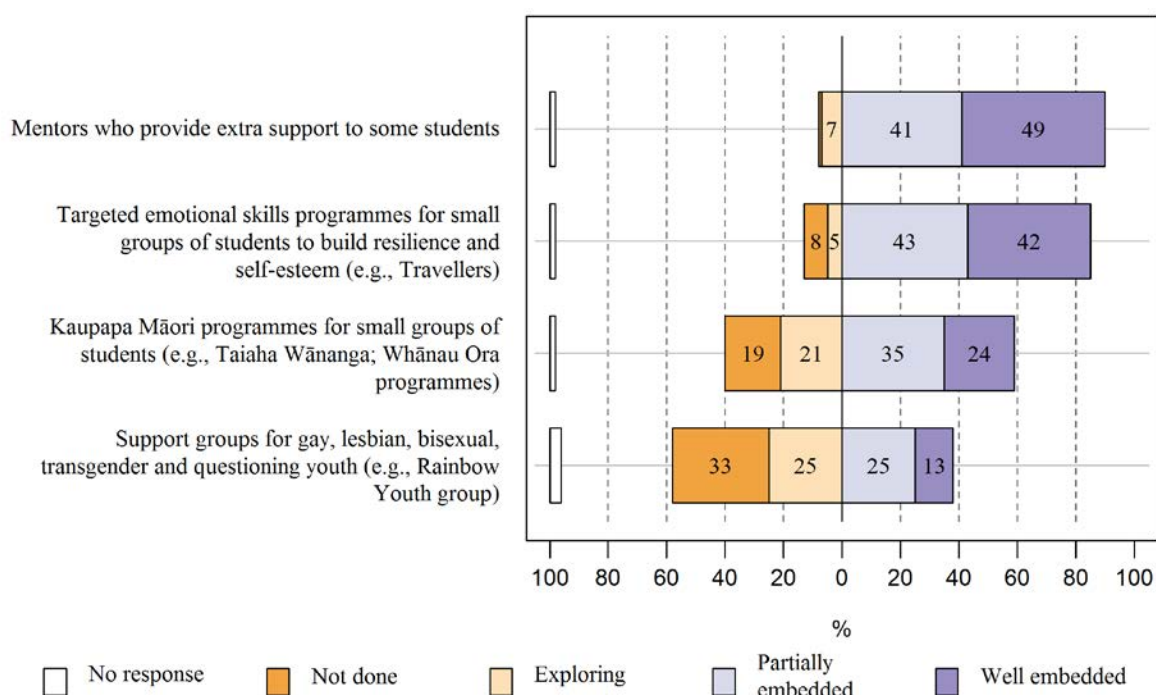
FIGURE 24 Working collaboratively to support individual students' wellbeing, behaviour and learning needs; principals' views (n = 182)



We asked principals about the initiatives in place for small groups of students who might have an identified need for extra support (see Figure 25). Approaches that were partially or well embedded in the majority of schools were mentoring and providing emotional skills programmes to build resilience and self-esteem for small groups of students.

A smaller proportion (38%) of principals indicated that support groups for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth were partially or well embedded at their school. Large schools and metropolitan schools were more likely to have these support groups in place.

FIGURE 25 Targeted support for small groups of students to manage their own wellbeing; principals' views (n = 182)



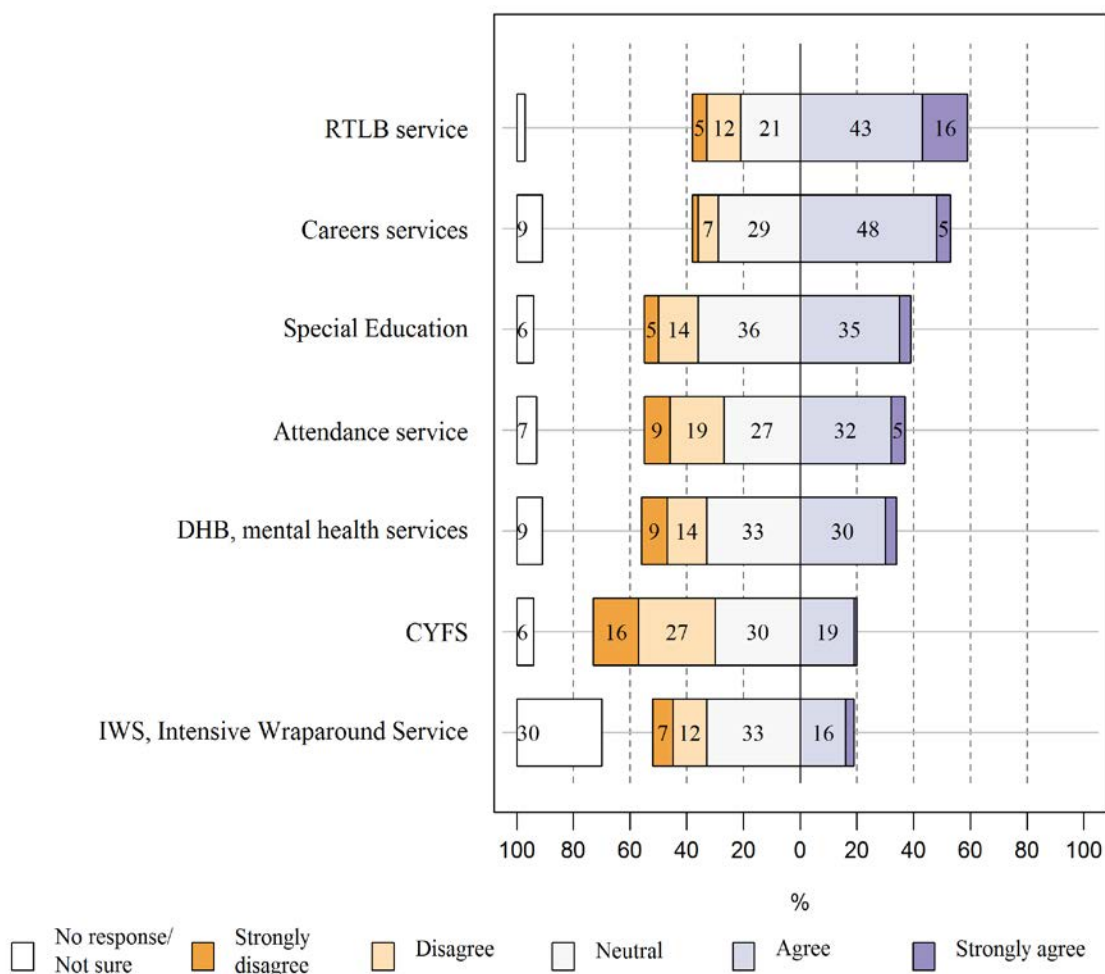
### Schools working with external agencies

Close to half the principals (46%) reported they had regular meetings of schools as a group with social agencies. Twenty-nine percent worked with local schools to reduce truancy. This figure was higher for principals in decile 3–4 schools (52%, and 35% for those at decile 1–2 schools, decreasing to 3% for principals of decile 9–10 schools).

As well as working collaboratively with other schools, principals were asked about the advice they have had from external agencies they might call on to advise them on supporting students' wellbeing (see Figure 26). Only for the RTLB service and Careers services did more than half the principals agree they have had helpful advice. In relation to receiving helpful advice from the district health board (DHB) mental health services and CYF—the agencies that support students with the highest needs—principals' agreement rates were quite low (35 and 20%). More disagreed than agreed they had received helpful advice from CYF (43%, compared with 20%). The fairly large proportions of "Neutral" responses may indicate that the school does not use these agencies or that the principal in many schools may not be the person who interacts with these agencies.



FIGURE 26 Principals' views of the helpfulness of agencies supporting work with individual students (n = 182)



We asked principals what external expertise their school needs in order to keep developing, and whether they could access this, as reported in *Chapter 11: Support and challenge*. Relevant here is that 36% of principals said they could not readily access expertise to support students with mental health issues. Putting this with the low rates of principals saying they get helpful advice from agencies such as CYF and DHB mental health services points to gaps in the mental health support for students, making it difficult for some schools to put Tier 3 approaches in place.

Principals had greater access to external expertise relevant to Tier 1 approaches: 79% could readily access this to improve student wellbeing, and 68% to improve student behaviour. Eight percent of principals said that ready access to external expertise for improving student wellbeing and behaviour was unavailable.

Half of the decile 9–10 principals said their school did not need external expertise to help them improve student behaviour, compared with 7–18% for all other decile bands (including 15% for decile 1–2 schools). There was no association between school decile and principals' responses about external expertise for improving student wellbeing or working with students with mental health issues.

Principals of schools in towns were the most likely to report being unable to access the external expertise they need for working with students with mental health issues (56%, compared with 35% for schools in small cities, 31% for metropolitan schools and 22% for rural schools).

As was shown in Figure 24, 94% of principals reported a partially- or well-embedded team approach being used to keep students at school by making sure all other consequences for behaviour are tried before students are stood down, suspended or expelled.

## The role of trustees in supporting students' wellbeing and behaviour

As detailed in *Chapter 8: Trustee perspectives and the work of school boards*, most trustees (82%) had consulted with their community in the past 12 months. Just under one-quarter of these trustees indicated their boards consulted their communities in the past year about students' health and wellbeing, and school culture. Fewer (around 15% each) reported consulting their communities about student attendance, student behaviour and safety of students. Half of the trustees on boards of decile 1–2 schools who had consulted their communities did so with a focus on student attendance. This proportion decreased to 3% for decile 9–10 schools.

Forty-seven percent of trustees reported that, during 2015, parents and whānau had raised issues with them related to student behaviour, discipline or bullying. For 26% of all trustees, improvements in student behaviour were one of their board's main achievements over the past year.

Among the written resources trustees said they had used for their trustee role over the past 12 months, three related to supporting students' wellbeing:

- Hautū—Māori cultural responsiveness self-review tool (New Zealand School Trustees Association, n.d.<sup>49</sup>), used by 26% of trustees
- the Ministry of Education's (2015) *Bullying prevention and response: A guide for schools*, used by 16%
- ERO's wellbeing guidelines, used by 11%.

The use of the wellbeing guidelines by trustees on boards of decile 9–10 schools (28%) was more than twice the rate of use for other deciles (ranging from 5 to 11%).

## Summary and discussion

Overall, there was some evidence of improvement since 2012 in the way secondary schools are supporting students' wellbeing. There was a range of proactive approaches to supporting students' wellbeing and social behaviour embedded at some schools. Some of these were aimed at all students (Tier 1 of the intervention triangle) and other approaches were targeted towards students who might have greater support needs (both Tier 2 and Tier 3). The latter group tended to be generally less well embedded in secondary schools than Tier 1 approaches.

Students at most schools had opportunities for contributing to their community. These opportunities have the potential to strengthen students' sense of belonging and are recognised as a protective factor for wellbeing. There was less evidence that schools strategically monitored these activities to ensure all students took up the provided opportunities.

At the school level, the data schools were most likely to be collecting and tracking over time related to attendance and behaviour, rather than students' mental and emotional wellbeing. In particular,

49 New Zealand School Trustees Association. (n.d.). *Hautū—Māori cultural responsiveness self-review tool*. Retrieved 14 March 2016, from <http://www.nzsta.org.nz/media/192019/hautu-full.pdf>

decile 3–4 schools were the most likely to have annual targets around student attendance and truancy, and reducing the number of behaviour incidents and stand-downs, suspensions and expulsions. There were signs of students in some schools having input into their school's approaches to wellbeing and social behaviour, in line with ERO's recommendation for schools to involve students more in decisions that affect them at school.

At the classroom level, most teachers were teaching strategies to help students manage their social and emotional wellbeing. Teachers working in the subject group of Technology, Health and PE, Transition, Careers and Special Education were most likely to do this.

The survey responses revealed some areas of potential focus. Schools varied as to the extent to which they had Tier 2 and Tier 3 initiatives in place to support small groups of students or individuals who are likely to be the most in need. One group of potentially at-risk students for whom there were support groups in fewer than half of schools is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Such support groups were more likely to be in place in large or metropolitan schools and less likely in schools in small or in rural locations.

Principals reported relatively low levels of access to mental health support, and in particular to helpful advice for students with mental health issues. Their survey responses suggest that further strengthening or resourcing is required to enhance the effectiveness of the collaboration between the Ministry of Education and CYF for ensuring the safety of at-risk students for whom schools' approaches fall into Tier 3.

## 6.

# Teachers' perspectives on their work

**Teachers' perspectives were sought about the following aspects of their work: their morale, workload and job satisfaction; experiences of professional learning; and their school culture and ways of working. We asked them to identify their main achievements, as well as the things they would like to change in their work. Finally, teachers gave an indication of what they thought the future might hold for their career. At the end of the survey, teachers were given an opportunity to comment about their work as a teacher, and 40% ( $n = 710$ ) did so. Their comments are included throughout this chapter.**

As we will see, secondary teachers were generally more positive about their work than in 2012, when the alignment of NCEA and NZC was impacting their professional lives. However, the evidence of school decile-associated differences will show that teachers' perspectives on some areas of their work vary widely. In many places, teachers' results resemble those of 2009, so we concentrate mainly on changes since 2012.

### About the teachers

Teacher surveys were sent to office managers at New Zealand's 313 state and state-integrated secondary schools. The surveys were accompanied by guidelines for distributing them randomly to every fourth teacher at the school. We received survey responses from teachers in 250 schools that were approximately representative of all New Zealand secondary schools. There was a slight over-representation of teachers from co-educational schools (74%, compared with 71% for all teachers) and an under-representation of teachers in boys' schools (10%, compared with 13%). The 1,777 teachers who responded were about 39% of those who were asked to participate.

Over time, there have been some changes in the ethnic composition of secondary teachers responding to the survey, with somewhat lower percentages of NZ European teachers: 88% in 2009, 85% in 2012 and 81% in 2015. This is not being countered by any noticeable increase in Māori, Pasifika or Asian teachers. Instead, it is the proportion of teachers identifying with “Other” ethnic groups that has increased from 3% in the previous two surveys to 14% in 2015. This “Other” group included teachers who gave their ethnicity as European, North American, South African, Middle Eastern and New Zealander/Kiwi. Sixty-three percent of teachers were female.

### Teaching experience and roles

This was a somewhat younger group of teachers than in 2012. Fifty-nine percent were under 50 years old, compared with 48% in 2012 and 54% in 2009. The proportion of teachers aged over 50 was down to 41% from 50% in the previous survey. More teachers of Mathematics and Science were over 50 years old than those teaching other subject areas (45%, compared with 37% for English and Languages, for example). Four percent of the teachers responding were over 65 years old.

Part-time teachers ( $n = 154$ ) comprised 9% of the teacher respondents. Part-time teachers were more likely than full-time teachers to be women (85% compared with 61% of full-time teachers) and to be 60 years or older (25% compared with 14%).

There were small differences in the number of years' teaching experience for the responding teachers in 2015, compared with 2012 and 2009. A greater proportion of teachers had less than 3 years' teaching experience (9%, up from 6% in 2012 and 2009), or had taught for 11 to 15 years (18%, up from 15% in 2012 and 14% in 2009). The proportion of teachers with more than 15 years' experience was 47%, down from 51% in 2012 and 50% in 2009.

We also asked teachers how many years they had been teaching at their current school. Twenty-five percent said they had been at their school for less than 3 years—an increase from around 18% in the last two surveys. Alongside this, there was a drop in the number who had been at their current school for 3 to 5 years (15%, compared with around 24% in previous surveys).

Three-quarters of the sample were class/subject teachers. Additional/other roles they held were:

- form teacher/tutor teacher/academic mentor (50%)
- head of learning area (HOLA)/head of department (HoD)/faculty leader/teacher in charge (TIC) (44%)
- holder of management unit(s) (38%)
- dean (13%)
- other (12%)
- AP/DP (5%)
- specialist classroom teacher (SCT) (4%)
- careers adviser/transition teacher (3%)
- guidance counsellor (1%).

Of the 50% of teachers with a form teacher/tutor teacher/academic mentor role, those in decile 1–2 schools were more likely to work with their students (in these groups) on a specific programme, such as study skills or academic guidance; 72% of this group of teachers did so, decreasing to 51% of those at decile 9–10 schools.

For analysis and reporting purposes, teachers' curriculum areas were combined into the following groupings:

- Mathematics and Science (29% of teachers responding)
- English and Languages (26%)

- Social Sciences, the Arts and Commerce (22%)
- Technology, Health and PE, Transition, Careers and Special Education (21%)
- Other areas (3%).

## Morale, workload and job satisfaction

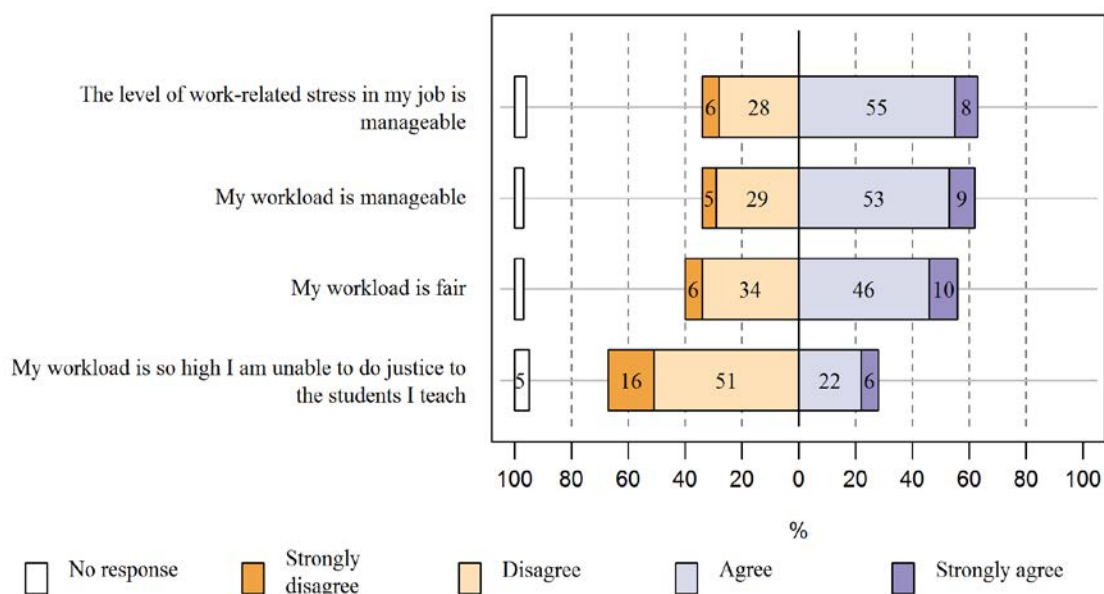
In 2015 there was evidence of teachers' morale levels returning to those reported in 2009, following a dip in 2012, when teachers were dealing with challenges involved in aligning NCEA with NZC. Sixty-nine percent of teachers rated their overall morale as a teacher as good or very good, up from 57% in 2012, and similar to the response in 2009 (70%). In 2015, 20% of teachers rated their overall morale as satisfactory, and 8% reported their morale was poor or very poor.

Morale differed according to teachers' roles. Eighty-five percent of those in AP/DP roles rated their morale as good or very good, compared with 70% of HoDs and 66% of class/subject teachers.

Just over 60% of the teachers reported manageable stress levels and workloads (see Figure 27).<sup>50</sup> Twenty-eight percent indicated their high workload meant they felt they were unable to do justice to their students.

Stress levels and workload had also improved somewhat since 2012, when fewer teachers reported manageable levels of stress (57%), manageable workloads (56%) and workloads they thought were fair (47%). In the 2012 survey, more teachers felt unable to do justice to their students because their workload was so high (37%).

FIGURE 27 Teachers' workload and work-related stress (n = 1,777)



50 As this report was being finalised, the PPTA published the results of their investigation of workload intensification, *PPTA workload taskforce report*, available at: <http://ppta.org.nz/resources/publication-list/3650-ppta-workload-taskforce-report-2016>

On the whole, school characteristics were not related to teachers' reports of their workload. However, teachers in small schools<sup>51</sup> stood out as being more likely to agree their workload was fair (86%, compared with 56% for all schools) and that their workload was manageable (83%, compared with 62%).

Differences in perceptions of workload were related to whether teachers worked full-time or part-time; 79% of part-time teachers thought the level of work-related stress in their job is manageable, compared with 61% of full-time teachers. Almost identical proportions agreed their workload is manageable. Part-time teachers were also more likely to agree their workload is fair (69% compared with 55% of full-time teachers).

The picture differed according to teachers' roles, with those in AP/DP roles more likely to agree:

- the level of work-related stress in their job is manageable (76%, compared with 65% of class/subject teachers and 59% of HoDs)
- their workload is manageable (76%, compared with 69% of class/subject teachers and 56% of HoDs)
- their workload is fair (71%, compared with 63% of class/subject teachers and 50% of HoDs).

While the national picture shows an improvement in issues around workload, Figure 27 shows it was still of concern for a substantial minority of secondary teachers. Concern about the intensification of expectations, their workload, associated stress levels and work-life balance were voiced by 21% of teachers in their overall comments at the end of the survey, and was the strongest theme in these comments:

I, like all the staff around me, have high stress, unmanageable workload, health problems as a result, and do not see teaching as a sustainable career.

I think it says it all that I am answering this at 10 to 11 on a Sunday morning, having spent the majority of the weekend marking again! Fed up with 13 hour days.

I genuinely care about all my students but I'm on anti-anxiety meds because of the workload-related stress issues.

Reducing to 0.8 part-time is the only way I can think of to give me the time needed to plan, prepare, assess, mark and report on classes as well as dean at year level, coach the football team and be a functioning and good husband and father.

I enjoy my classes but I do a lot of work every night/weekend. Partly that is because I have started teaching history—L1 last year + added L2 this year. This means a huge amount of preparation in this time but also a lot of marking—and getting used to how to mark History assignments. The workload + stress level is manageable because I spend so much time doing schoolwork, I have very little 'me' time—you didn't ask about our work/life balance. Mine is shocking—work, work, work.

Too much paperwork that does not raise students' self-belief & achievement, passion to learn or assistance in career pathways. Am considering another job—only been teaching 3 years—want to have some babies, restudy, possibly change but still work in education. Am working sooo many hours after school/weekends- Pastoral is huge for me—connecting with whānau. Students—all this paperwork is not building/nurturing relationships.

Overall, 84% of teachers reported getting the non-contact hours for which they were timetabled.

Teachers in high-decile schools were more likely to actually get their planned non-contact hours: the figure was 87% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools, compared with 75% for those at decile 1–2 schools.

Eighteen percent of teachers were working more than 20 hours per week outside the times when students are required to be on site. Figure 28 summarises teachers' responses about these hours in 2009,

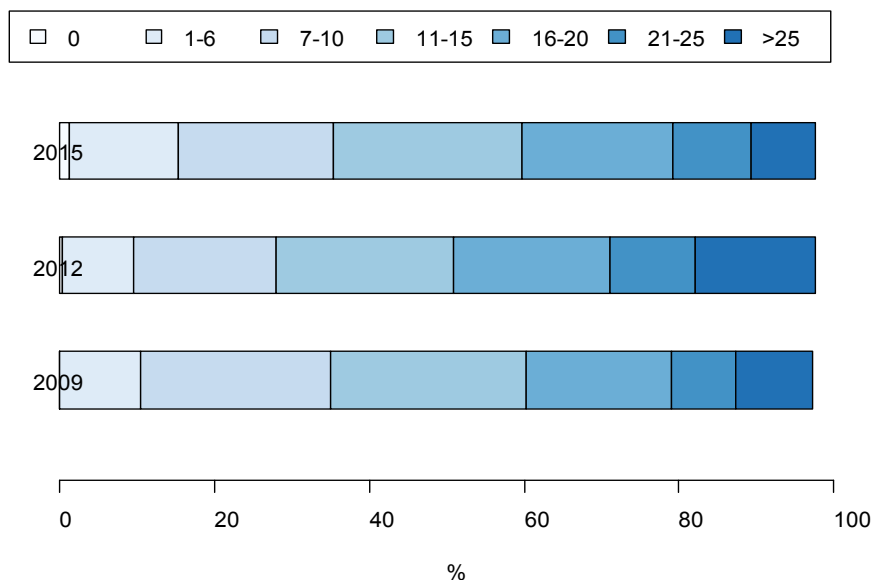
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51 Small schools have fewer than 250 students; small-medium schools have from 250 to 399 students; medium schools have from 400 to 749 students; medium-large schools have from 750 to 1,499 students; and large schools have 1,500 students or more.



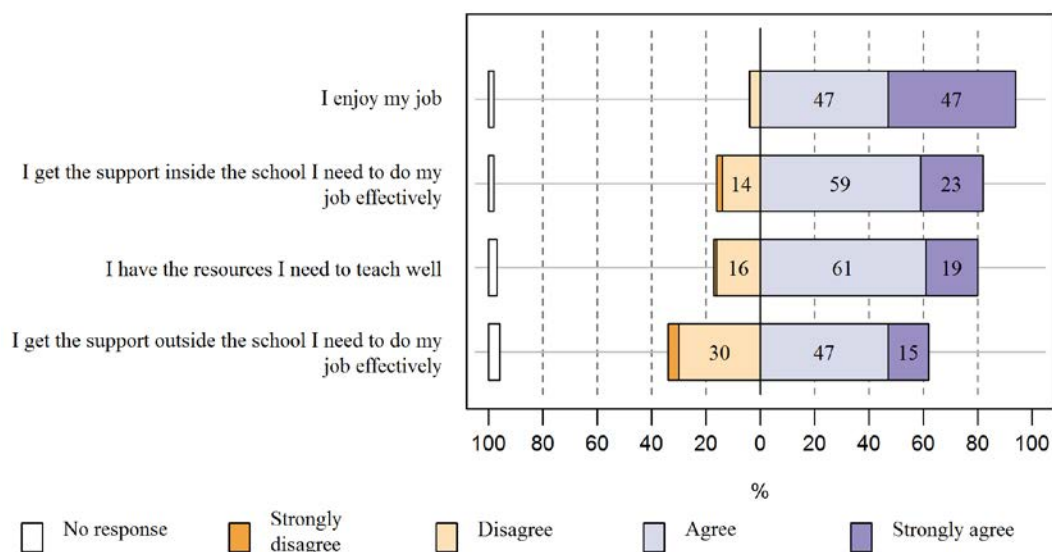
2012 and 2015. A slight improvement was evident in 2015; those working fewer than 6 hours increased, and those working more than 25 hours decreased slightly. As we saw for teacher morale and workload, the general pattern resembled that of 2009 rather than 2012.

**FIGURE 28 Hours teachers reported working outside times when students were required to be onsite, in 2009, 2012 and 2015**



The slight reduction in hours teachers reported working was also accompanied by an upturn in indicators associated with job satisfaction (shown in Figure 29). Those who agreed they enjoyed their job increased (94%, compared with 90% in 2012). There were also increases in the percentages of teachers who agreed they get the support they needed to do their jobs effectively, particularly inside the school (81%, compared with 68% in 2012) and, to a smaller extent, outside the school (62%, compared with 56%). Most agreed they had the resources they need to teach well.

**FIGURE 29 Teachers' job satisfaction and support (n = 1,777)**



Although there were no decile-related differences in teachers' morale or job satisfaction, there were differences in the resources and support teachers reported receiving inside the school. Fewer teachers in decile 1–2 schools confirmed they had the resources they needed to teach well (71%) or the support they needed inside the school to teach effectively (75%), compared with around 87% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools.

Eighty-eight percent of teachers in large schools agreed they had the resources they need to teach well, compared with 80% of teachers in all schools.

Job satisfaction was related to teachers' roles; those in AP/DP roles were more positive here:

- 67% *strongly* agreed they enjoy their job, compared with 47% of HoDs and 42% of class/subject teachers
- 92% agreed/strongly agreed they get the support inside the school they need to do their job effectively, compared with 79% of HoDs and 84% of class/subject teachers
- 92% agreed/strongly agreed they have the resources they need to teach well, compared with 79% of HoDs and 83% of class/subject teachers.

Another factor that is likely to affect teacher morale is how safe teachers feel at school. It was rare for teachers to feel frequently unsafe in their classrooms: 1% felt so in 2015, as in 2012 and 2009. In 2015, fewer teachers reported occasionally feeling unsafe in their classrooms (15%, compared with 21% in both 2012 and 2009). Fewer teachers felt unsafe in their school grounds, hall, corridors or other areas outside their class: 1% had felt this frequently in 2015, down from 4% in 2012 and 3% in 2009, and 19% occasionally, down from around 29% in 2012 and 2009.

The picture differed according to school decile; 27% of teachers in decile 1–2 schools said they had occasionally felt unsafe in their classes, decreasing to 4% for those in decile 9–10 schools. Thirty-seven percent of those in decile 1–2 schools said they had occasionally felt unsafe in the school grounds, hall, corridors or other areas outside their class, decreasing to 7% of teachers in decile 9–10 schools. Three percent of teachers in decile 1–2 schools had frequently felt unsafe in the school grounds, hall, corridors or other areas outside their class, decreasing to less than 1% for those in decile 9–10 schools.

In the comments they made about their work as a teacher at the end of the survey, 10% said how much they enjoyed teaching:

I love my job. I love to reflect on what I am doing and try to see if things can be done more effectively.

Highly rewarding, but it isn't a job, it is a lifestyle. It is rare to find a good teacher who doesn't put in a lot of hours outside of 9am–3pm. Overall, I have loved my decision to become a teacher later in life.

I love the students, my subjects, my school and the changes occurring due to the introduction of BYOD. It is exciting and rewarding.

Seven percent of teachers commented at the end of the survey that they wanted to feel more valued, and to be rewarded more fairly within teaching:

Teachers play an important role in the lives of every student. However at times teachers feel undervalued, especially when governments refer to us. We work with people every day and can't be scrutinised under a business model. Teachers are teachers 24 hours a day, we constantly worry about our students. We need to feel 'valued'.

It is not fair that a core subject teacher receives the same pay and duty expectations as other teachers of options with half the number of students to teach.

Teachers who go over and beyond need to be rewarded. Otherwise schools will lose those teachers and be left with the lazy and the incompetent destroying the success of the students and the economy.

The more competent you are, the more responsibility is put on you. There need to be strategies in place for teachers who remain unwilling to learn/improve their practice. It's demoralising to see them take the same pay away for doing a less effective job.

Top of scale teachers in Australia receive \$100,000 NZ per annum. We are grossly underpaid given the expectations of society. We are regarded as social workers and nurses not educationalists by wider society.

## Career plans

Teachers' career plans have changed little since 2009, as shown in Table 17. In 2015 teachers were slightly more likely to be planning to stay in their current role in the same school than in 2012: this may reflect the higher proportion of teachers responding in 2015 who were in their first 3 years of teaching at their current school.

Around one-quarter indicated they intend taking on more responsibility or seeking promotion. Slightly fewer teachers were planning to apply for a study award in 2015 than in 2009.

TABLE 17 Teachers' career plans for the next 5 years (2009, 2012 and 2015)<sup>52</sup>

What teachers plan to do	2009 (n = 871) %	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %
Continue as I am now	38	33	37
Increase level of responsibility	25	24	25
Seek promotion	*	*	23
Apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship	25	23	21
Begin or complete a postgrad qualification	*	16	15
Retire	11	13	14
Change schools	15	18	14
Change careers within education	12	10	9
Reduce level of responsibility	7	8	9
Leave teaching for personal reasons (e.g., travel, family)	10	5	9
Retrain/change to a career outside education	10	10	8
Not sure	6	6	7
Other	3	2	2

\*Not asked

Teachers' career plans varied according to teachers' roles; those in AP/DP roles were more likely to indicate their career plans for the next 5 years were to:

- Seek promotion (39%, compared with 23% of HoDs and 20% of class/subject teachers)
- Apply for a study award/sabbatical/fellowship (30%, compared with 27% of HoDs and 11% of class/subject teachers)
- Retire (20%, compared with 17% of HoDs and 10% of class/subject teachers).

52 Teachers could give multiple responses here.

Part-time teachers were more likely to be planning to retire in the next 5 years (24% compared with 14% of full-time teachers).

Thirteen percent of teachers were interested in becoming a principal in the future, the same as in 2009, and lower than the 19% who indicated interest in 2012. Although in both the previous surveys 78% of teachers had indicated they were not interested in this role, this dropped to 71% in 2015. A further 15% of teachers were unsure.

Interest in becoming a principal was related to teachers' roles; 34% of those in AP/DP roles expressed interest, as did 17% of deans, 13% of HoDs and 10% of classroom teachers.

### Teachers' experiences of school-based professional learning

There has been a growing understanding of the importance of professional learning opportunities within teachers' own work, thinking of the particular students they work with and school context. Opportunities for teachers to observe colleagues teach—in their school and beyond—and for them to be observed and engage in a learning conversation around the feedback have been found to strengthen teachers' pedagogical knowledge.<sup>53</sup> To change their existing practice, teachers need to be supported to experiment and innovate, and to have time to develop an in-depth understanding of why a particular approach might—or might not—be effective for their students.

As shown in Figure 30, the majority of teachers were at schools where experimentation with new ideas is encouraged and could get useful feedback on their teaching by inviting a colleague to observe. Many also had good opportunities to explore deeper ideas and theories that underpin new approaches. Just over half had opportunities to see and discuss the work of other teachers in their school when they wanted to do things differently. The professional learning of around 30% of the teachers had not focused sufficiently on implications for their own (curriculum) learning area, and a similar proportion had found new ideas hard to put into practice.

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53 Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration [BES]*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

FIGURE 30 School-based opportunities for teachers' professional learning (n = 1,777)



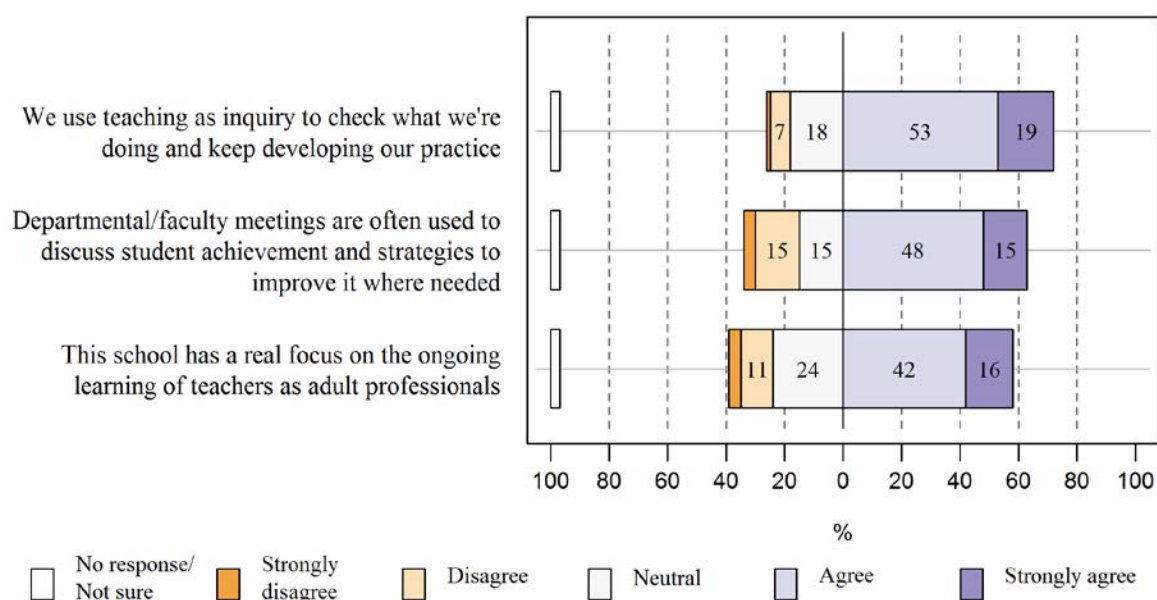
Table 18 shows a marked growth in opportunities for teachers to explore deeper ideas and theories since 2009 and 2012, and a rebound in the levels of some other aspects of professional learning in schools to 2009 levels, and even higher.

TABLE 18 Shifts in opportunities for teachers' professional learning; teachers' "agree" and "strongly agree" responses for 2009, 2012 and 2015

School-based opportunities	2009 (n = 871) %	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %
Experimentation with new ideas has been encouraged and supported in our school	70	58	82
We have good opportunities in this school to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new approaches	40	40	62
I have good opportunities to see and discuss the work of teachers in this school when I want to do things differently	51	47	56
Our school leaders model inspiring professional learning	43	39	48

Teachers' views about how their schools emphasise ongoing teacher learning and support teachers to work together to improve student achievement are shown in Figure 31. Fifty-eight percent of teachers thought that their school had a real focus on their ongoing learning, 63% that departmental meetings were often used to look at student achievement and discuss strategies to improve it and 72% used teaching as inquiry.

FIGURE 31 Teachers' views of their school-based professional learning (n = 1,777)



In 2015 more teachers indicated their departmental or faculty meetings were often used to discuss student achievement and strategies to improve this where needed (63%, up from 54% in 2012 and 47% in 2009). This steady increase is consistent with the national emphasis given the Better Public Services target for 85% of 18-year-olds to achieve NCEA Level 2 or equivalent by 2017.

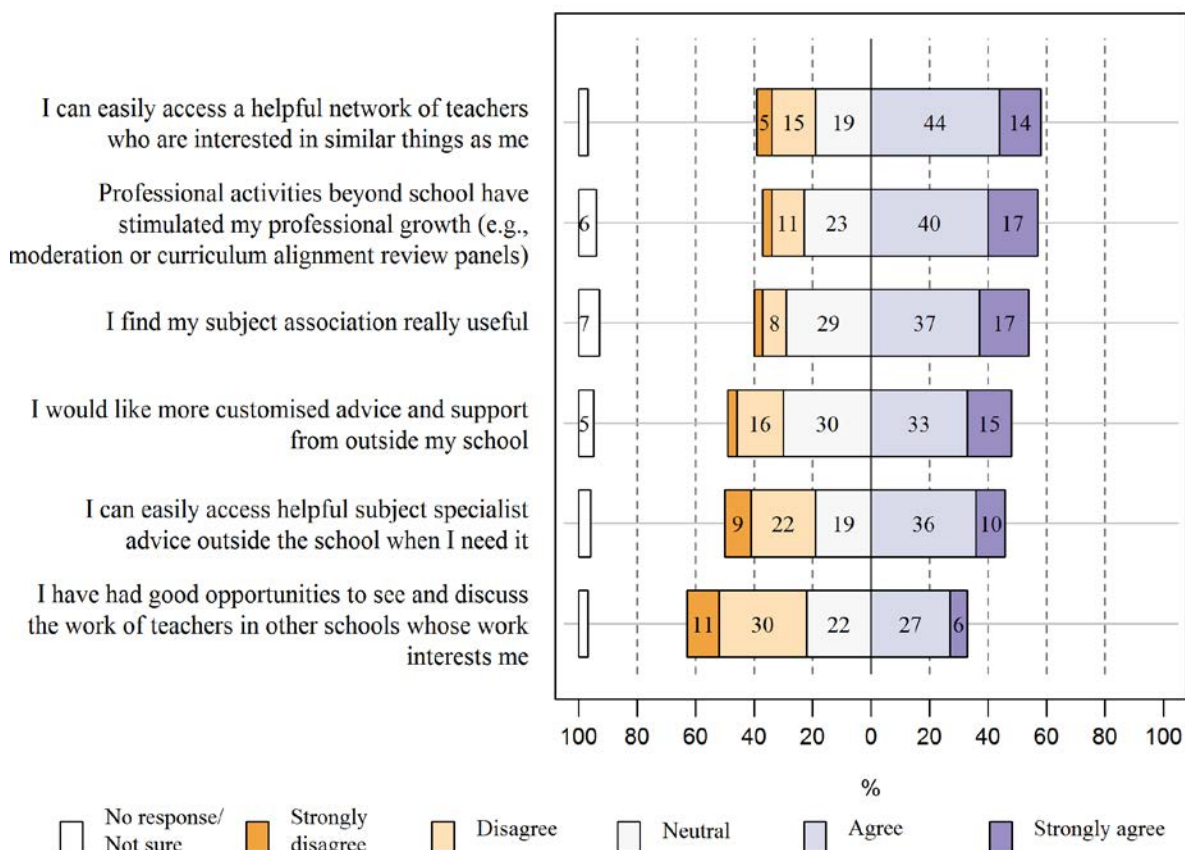
Looking at differences associated with school characteristics, a greater proportion of teachers in decile 9–10 schools agreed their school has a focus on the ongoing learning of teachers as adult professionals (66%, decreasing to 51% for those in decile 3–4 schools and 53% for those in decile 1–2 schools). A similar school size-related pattern was evident (68% of teachers in large schools, decreasing to 50% in small schools).

### Access to professional learning beyond the school

Over half the secondary teachers reported that they could easily access a helpful network of teachers, had their professional growth stimulated by professional activities beyond school and found their subject association really useful (see Figure 32). Fewer than half reported they would like more advice and support from outside their school. One-third of the teachers had opportunities to see and discuss the work of teachers in other schools whose work interests them (compared with over half who reported having these opportunities in their own school).



FIGURE 32 Teachers' access to external support and advice (n = 1,777)



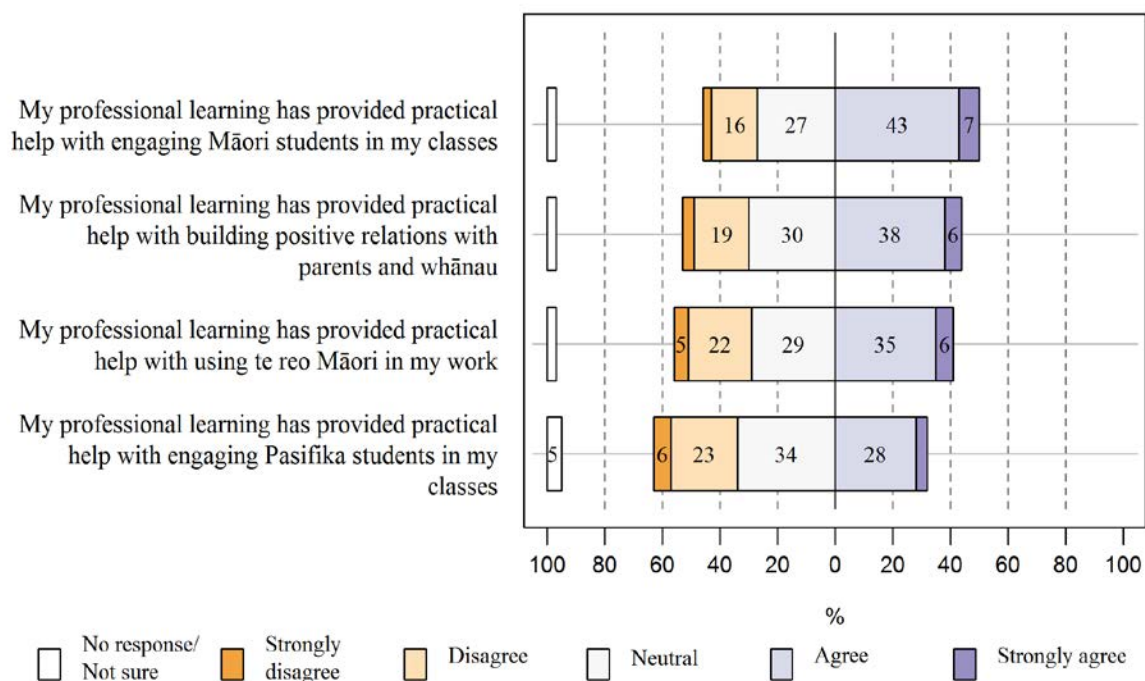
More teachers said they can easily access helpful subject specialist advice outside the school when they need it (46%, up from 37% in 2012), and fewer indicated they would like more customised advice and support from outside their school (48%, down from 63% in 2012, when the NCEA–NZC alignment was occurring). There were no improvements since 2012 in relation to the other items in Figure 32.

### Meeting the needs of Māori and Pasifika students

No more than half the teachers agreed their professional learning had provided practical help for engaging with Māori students and their parents and whānau (see Figure 33). Even fewer had experienced professional learning that helped them engage with Pasifika students. Given that around 90% of the teachers were neither Māori nor Pasifika themselves, and improving Māori and Pasifika students' outcomes continues to be a government priority, these figures seem fairly low.



FIGURE 33 Practical help for teachers to work with Māori and Pasifika students (n = 1,777)



The two items relating to professional learning that provided practical help with engaging Māori and Pasifika students were also included in the 2012 survey and teachers' rates of agreement were largely unchanged in 2015.

Teachers in decile 1–4 schools were more likely to indicate their professional learning had provided practical help for engaging Māori students in their classes (59%, compared with 48% for deciles 5–10).

Responses from teachers in decile 1–2 schools about their professional learning were clearly different for some of the items covered in Figures 32 and 33, indicating more attention at those schools to Māori and Pasifika students, as well as greater challenges. Decile 1–2 teachers':

- professional learning had helped them build relationships with parents and whānau (60%, compared with 40 to 43% for teachers in decile 3–10 schools)
- professional learning had provided practical help for engaging Pasifika students (49%, compared with 29 to 32% for teachers in decile 3–10 schools).

In addition, decile 1–2 teachers:

- would like more customised advice and support from outside their school (60% for decile 1–2, decreasing to 41% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools)
- had fewer good opportunities to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new approaches (58%, increasing to 69% for teachers in decile 9–10 schools).

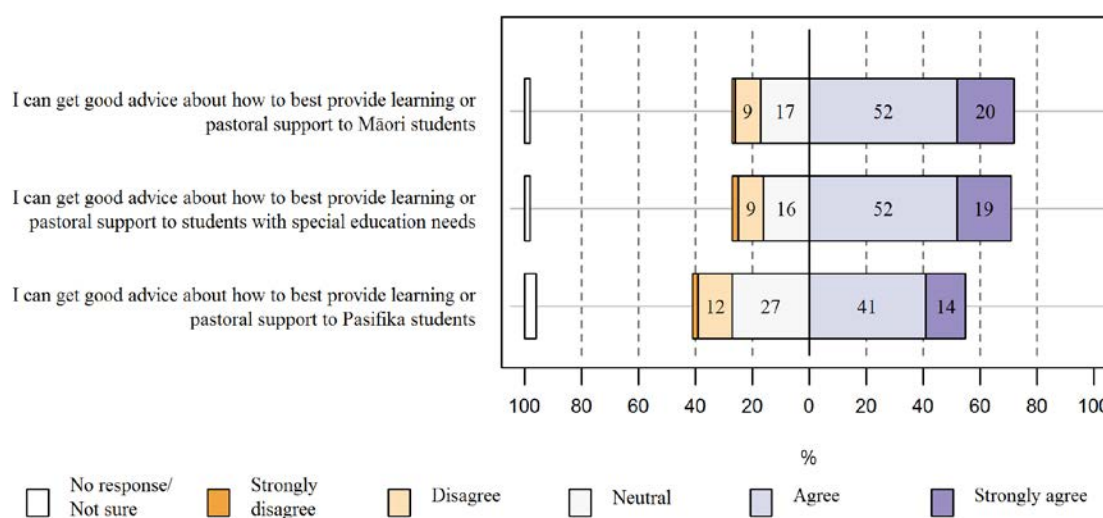
Teachers of Mathematics and Science were least likely to agree their professional learning had provided practical help with using te reo Māori in their work (35%), and teachers of Social Sciences and the Arts were most likely to have had this practical help (43%).

School size was also a factor in teachers' professional learning, with the bigger pool of teaching staff at large schools meaning more teachers had access to colleagues with similar interests, and less need to

call on external expertise. Teachers in large schools were more likely to confirm they can easily access a helpful network of teachers (60%, decreasing to 50% for those in small schools). Fewer teachers in large schools indicated they would like more customised advice and support from outside their school (43%, increasing to 60% for teachers in small schools).

Figure 34 shows that more than two-thirds of the teachers agreed they can get good advice about providing learning or pastoral support for Māori students and those with special education needs. Teachers were less likely to agree they can get good advice about providing learning or pastoral care to Pasifika students, although the figure was still over half.

FIGURE 34 Availability of advice about priority learners for teachers (n = 1,777)

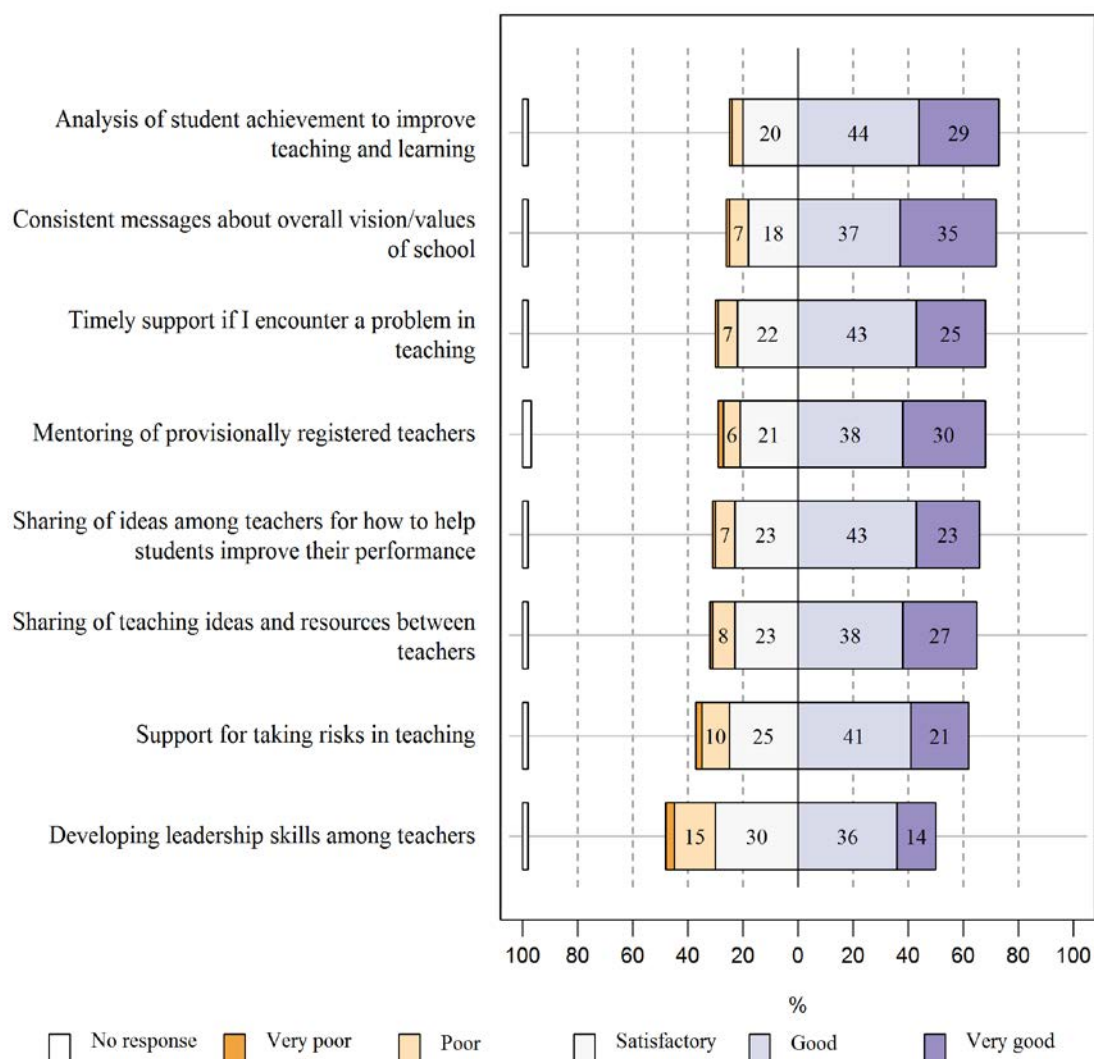


## School culture and ways of working

We asked teachers about the quality of their school culture in some key dimensions that research has shown to be linked to positive learning environments for students, and good working and learning environments for teachers.

Around two-thirds of the teachers rated as good or very good all but one of these aspects of their school culture, shown in Figure 35. They worked in an environment in which the ongoing work of improving teaching and learning was enabled by a school culture in which collegial sharing and support was valued and available. Leadership skill development, which is increasingly emphasised as a prime means to achieve improvements, was rated as good or very good by half the teachers.

FIGURE 35 Teachers' views of the quality of key aspects of school culture (n = 1,777)

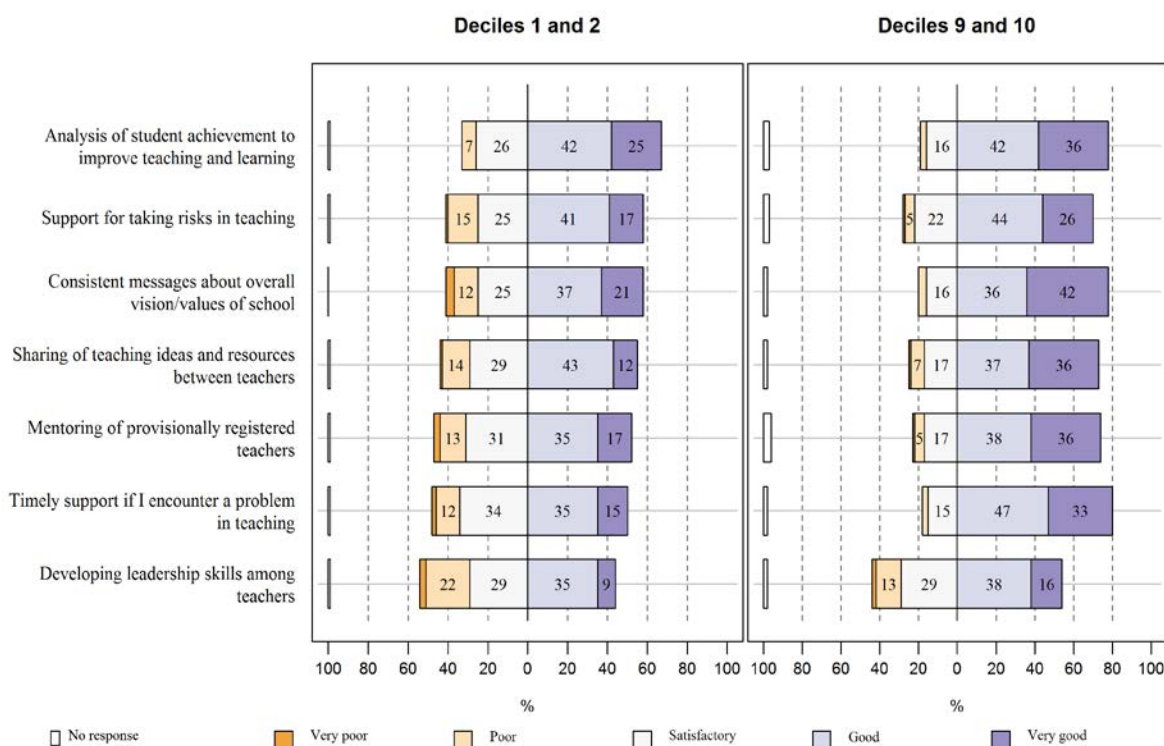


Teachers' views of the quality of the following aspects of school culture had improved since 2012:

- analysis of student achievement to improve teaching and learning (73% rated this as “good” or “very good”, compared with 67% in 2012)
- consistent messages about overall vision/values at school (72% rated this as “good” or “very good”, compared with 62% in 2012)
- timely support if I encounter a problem in teaching (68%, up from 54%)
- sharing of ideas among teachers for how to help students improve their performance (66%, up from 58% in 2012 and 53% in 2009)
- support for taking risks in teaching (62%, up from 50%)
- developing leadership skills among teachers (49%, up from 41%).

However, as Figure 36 shows, teachers in decile 9–10 schools were more likely than those in decile 1–2 schools to report consistent messages about their school's overall vision or values, and the sharing and support between teachers that is needed to keep developing practice.

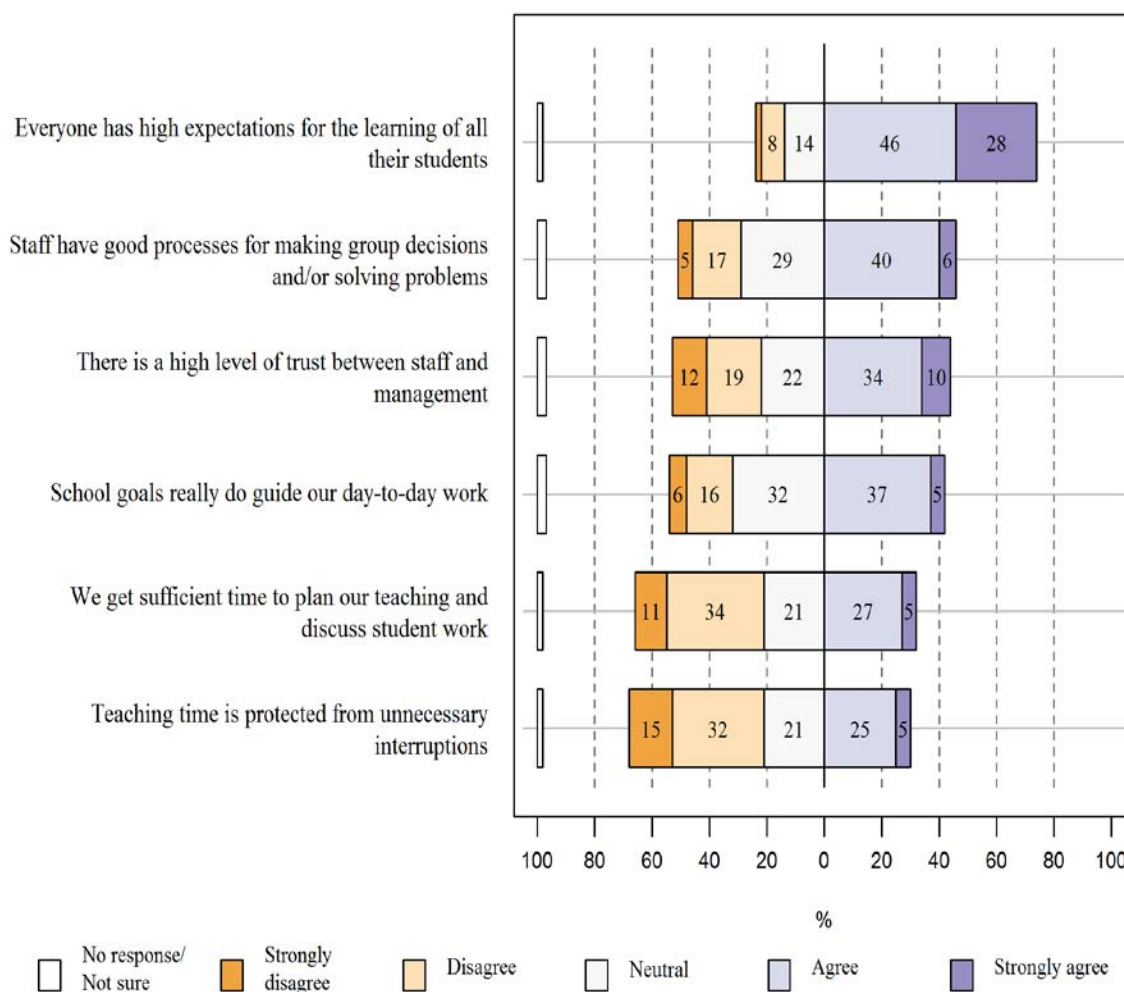
FIGURE 36 Decile-related differences in views of school culture; teachers in decile 1–2 and decile 9–10 schools (n = 150 and 358, respectively)



A difference associated with school size was reflected in teachers’ “good” and “very good” ratings of these aspects of school culture:

- analysis of student achievement to improve teaching and learning (80% of the teachers in large schools, compared with 60% of those in small schools)
- mentoring of provisionally registered teachers (78%, compared with 50%)
- sharing of teaching ideas and resources between teachers (72%, compared with 56%).

Consistency, trust and time are also important for effective school cultures. Figure 37 shows that almost three-quarters of the secondary teachers agreed everyone at their school had high expectations for all learners. Less than half the teachers indicated a high level of trust between staff and management in their school and good processes for making group decisions and solving problems. Around 30% said they got sufficient time to plan and discuss student work, and that teaching time was protected from unnecessary interruptions: both of which are needed to realise high expectations for students’ learning.

FIGURE 37 Teachers' views of their school culture ( $n = 1,777$ )

Compared with 2012, there were small increases in the proportions of teachers who agreed that school goals really do guide their day-to-day work (37% of teachers in 2012, up to 43% in 2015), and that they get sufficient time to plan their teaching and discuss student work (27%, up to 32%).

Two decile-related differences were evident here, too. In decile 1–2 schools, fewer teachers agreed everyone had high expectations for the learning of all their students (57%, increasing to 86% for decile 9–10 school teachers). High levels of trust between staff and management were more likely to be reported by decile 9–10 school teachers (52%, decreasing to 38% for teachers in decile 5–6 schools, then increasing to 40% of teachers in decile 1–2 schools).

## Teachers' achievements

Overall, teachers were more positive in 2015 about their achievements in the past 3 years than in 2012 or 2009 (see Table 19). For example, in 2015, 59% of the teachers identified six or more main achievements, compared with 54% in 2012, and 47% in 2009.

Over the three surveys, four aspects of their work have remained those most frequently identified by teachers as their main achievements: increases in their own knowledge or skills; improvements in

student achievement; use of new teaching practices or approaches; and a positive or improved learning environment. For each of these four main achievements, the proportions of teachers reporting them decreased from 2009 to 2012, then increased to exceed 2009 levels in the 2015 survey. This pattern and timing coincide with the demands made on teachers' energy for the realignment of NCEA and NZC around 2012.

TABLE 19 Teachers' main achievements in the last three surveys; 2009, 2012 and 2015<sup>54</sup>

Main achievements	2009 (n = 871) %	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %
Increased my own knowledge/skills	70	63	73
Improvements in student achievement	54	60	65
Used new teaching practices/approaches	51	43	63
Positive/improved learning environment	56	47	57
Improved learning with digital technology	*	*	52
Refined/introduced new NCEA assessments	36	46	48
Increased student engagement level in my classes	46	43	45
Implementation of an innovative programme	33	34	41
Better meeting of Māori students' needs	*	31	36
Further developed students' competencies such as leadership, self-management or independent learning	*	24	32
Improvement of student behaviour	28	35	28
Improved student assessment for learning	23	27	27
Made more connections between the classroom programme and the local or national contexts, history, events, concerns or issues	*	20	25
More involvement of parents with students' learning	12	16	23
Better meeting of needs of Pasifika students	*	18	23
Better meeting of needs of students with special learning needs	*	14	20
Other	4	2	3
Nothing has really changed	2	5	2

\*Not asked

In 2015, the biggest increase was from 43% to 63% of teachers who reported using new teaching practices/approaches as a main achievement. Related to using new practices, 73% of teachers reported increasing their knowledge/skills—also up from the 2012 figure. Taken together, these responses also suggest that, since 2012, teachers have been able to attend more to developing their pedagogy.

54 Note: Teachers could respond to multiple items.



Alongside these increases, steady gains since 2009 were evident in the proportion of teachers reporting improvements in student achievement. Increases of a similar size—around 5% since 2012—were seen in the proportions of teachers reporting that one of their main achievements was better meeting the needs of priority learner groups. The increased proportion of teachers who said one of their main achievements was better meeting the needs of students with special needs is likely to be related to the increase in teachers and principals agreeing NCEA helps with these students' inclusion, reported in *Chapter 3: Working with NCEA*. For 23% of teachers, one of their main achievements was more involvement of parents with students' learning, up from 16% in 2012.

Only two items showed a decrease in 2015. The proportion of teachers who reported improved student behaviour as a main achievement decreased from 35% in 2012 to 28% in 2015. The number reporting nothing had really changed was down to 2%, the same as in 2009.

### Changes teachers would make in their work

In 2015 teachers wanted to make fewer changes to their work than in 2012 and 2009. The median number of changes teachers wanted to make was six, compared with eight in 2012 and nine in 2009.

Looking at what teachers said they would like to change (see Table 20), better pay was in the top three most frequently-mentioned changes, for the first time since 2003. The secondary teachers' union, the Post-Primary Teachers Association (PPTA), had noted in their 2014 briefing papers for the new Government<sup>55</sup> that teachers' salaries had fallen well behind the cost of living in New Zealand, so teachers' increased desire for better pay should come as no surprise.

Reducing administration/paperwork remained one of the most-often selected things teachers would change about their work, as was having more time to reflect/plan/share ideas, and more non-contact time to work with other teachers. They were less concerned than they had been in previous years to have fewer non-teaching duties and reduce the pace of change.<sup>56</sup>

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55 The PPTA document, *Advice to the new government, October 2014* can be found at <http://www.ppta.org.nz/resources/publication-list>

56 Related to the changes teachers would like, in *Chapter 2: Supporting students' learning*, we report the barriers teachers experienced to making changes or maintaining the quality of the curriculum they teach.



TABLE 20 Things teachers would change about their work as a teacher; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Things teachers would change	2009 (n = 871) %	2012 (n = 1,266) %	2015 (n = 1,777) %
Reduce administration/paperwork	62	63	64
Better pay	44	40	60
More time to reflect/plan/share ideas	59	65	57
More non-contact time to work with other teachers	46	46	51
Reduce assessment workload	47	51	46
Reduce number of initiatives at any one time	43	48	45
Reduce class sizes	47	45	41
More sharing of knowledge/ideas with teachers from other schools	37	38	38
Fewer non-teaching duties	41	40	31
More support staff	35	34	29
More appreciation of my work from my school's management	26	33	27
Better communication by my school's leaders	*	*	24
Better access to external curriculum advice	*	28	24
Reduce pace of change	30	38	23
Better provision for special needs	22	18	22
More support for me to teach students with behaviour issues	*	29	22
More advice available when assessment results show gap in student learning	15	19	15
More support for me to adapt NZC for students with special needs	*	10	11
Other	2	4	4
Nothing	-	1	1

\*Not asked

There were some decile-related associations for the things that teachers would change about their work. Those in decile 9–10 schools showed the most interest in having more pay and reductions in workload, while teachers in decile 1–2 schools wanted more support and advice. More specifically, teachers in decile 9–10 schools were most likely to say they would change these things:

- better pay (66%, generally decreasing to 55% for those at decile 1–2 schools)
- reduce assessment workload (54%, decreasing to 34% for those at decile 1–2 schools).

Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were most likely to say they would change these things:

- more sharing of knowledge/ideas with teachers from other schools (48%, decreasing to 33% for those at decile 9–10 schools)
- more support to teach students with behaviour issues (34%, decreasing to 9%)

- better communication by my school's leaders (33%, decreasing to 21%)
- more support staff (33%, decreasing to 24%)
- more advice available when assessment results show gap in student learning (23%, decreasing to 10%).

School size made a difference here, too. Teachers in medium–large schools were most likely to want better pay (63%, and 60% of teachers in large schools, decreasing to 48% of those in small schools,).

Those in large schools were most likely to want:

- more time to reflect/plan/share ideas (60%, decreasing to 33% of teachers in small schools)
- reduced assessment workload (52%, decreasing to 35%)
- reduced class size (52%, decreasing to 6%).

Teachers in small schools were more likely than their large-school counterparts to want better access to external curriculum advice, and more sharing of knowledge/ideas with teachers from other schools.

Some variation was associated with teachers' roles; HoDs were more likely to say a change they would make would be to reduce administration/paperwork (71%, compared with 58% of class/subject teachers and 48% of those in AP/DP roles). HoDs were also more likely to identify reducing the number of initiatives at any one time as something they would change (52%, compared with 34% of class/subject teachers and 30% of those in AP/DP roles). Class/subject teachers were more likely to indicate reducing class sizes as a change they would like (47%, compared with 39% of HoDs and 25% of those in AP/DP roles).

In their comments at the end of the survey, 6% of teachers commented on their desire to devote more time to teaching, planning and reflecting (and less time on administration, NCEA/Ministry of Education demands) in comments like these:

Too much admin. Not enough focus/time on P.D. and classroom teaching (need dedicated time for each).

There is far too much bureaucratic paperwork involved in teaching that has no relevance to improving my teaching or the learning of my students which is the most important part of my job!!

I feel I am constantly struggling to find time to think about how I am going to teach and plan good lessons because I am assessing, discussing assessing, going to briefings, meetings, listening to more initiatives and more things that we are supposed to do other than plan good lessons.

## Summary and discussion

There was consistent evidence that teachers as a group were feeling more positive about their work than in 2012 when the alignment of NCEA and NZC was at the forefront for many. Morale and enjoyment levels had lifted, and workload manageability showed some improvement. Teachers were more positive about their achievements, and wanted to change fewer things about their work than they had in 2012 and 2009. In general, teachers' responses described in this chapter were more similar to those of 2009 than 2012.

Opportunities for teachers' ongoing professional learning, situated within their work in the context of their own students and school, are an important feature of strong school cultures, and such collaborative work requires the provision of teacher release time. Teachers' school-based opportunities for professional learning had improved since 2012, with more indicating experimentation was encouraged and that they could explore the ideas and theories underpinning new approaches. Just over half the teachers wanted more time to work together with other teachers. Most wanted to reduce the amount of administration and paperwork they had to do, and nearly half wanted to reduce their assessment workload. Looking at this combined evidence, some teachers were interested in adjusting the balance of how their energies are spent.

But the playing field was far from level for all teachers. The evidence points to a need in decile 1–2 schools for more support for teachers, improved leadership and greater consistency of expectations. Those teaching in decile 1–2 schools were more likely to miss out on their timetabled non-contact hours and to have felt unsafe in their classes. At the same time, teachers in these schools were less likely to report everyone having high expectations for all students' learning, and high levels of trust between staff and school leaders.

Teachers' experiences were also associated with school size. Teachers in large schools were able to draw on the expertise of a big group of teachers, and therefore felt less need of the external advice and support that their small-school counterparts would like. There was evidence of more collegial sharing of ideas and resources than was reported by teachers in smaller schools. Funding seemed to be less of an issue for teachers in bigger schools. Depending on school size, teachers' perspectives differed about how their ongoing professional learning was prioritised.

Teachers in AP/DP roles were more likely to report good morale overall, than those in HoD or class/subject teacher roles. More than teachers in other roles, HoDs' wanted both the administrative aspect of their work and the number of initiatives at any one time reduced.

# 7.

## Principals' perspectives on their work

### Principals' achievements

**We asked principals what their main achievements had been over the past 3 years. Our aim was to find out what they have focused on, and what results they see from their work. The items we include cover some key responsibilities of the principal's role; policy emphases, such as the stronger focus on improving Māori student performance; and what we know from research about effective leadership and school processes. Looking back to 2009 allows us to see what has changed over time in the national picture of what secondary principals focus on and what they think they achieve.**

The first set of items in Table 21 cover some key aspects of school wellbeing and viability. Most secondary principals have been paying attention to their school reputation, often supporting that with an increased focus on strengths-based school culture and their senior leadership team, and offering a good range of co-curricular activities. Stable trends over time in responses to items about school roll stability and the quality of school property indicate that around a third of principals at any one time find these hard to influence. A stable trend is also evident in the proportion of principals who encounter and successfully manage a crisis in their school: just over a third of principals can expect to deal with a crisis in their school over a 3-year period (and perhaps more than one, since we did not ask about the number of crises).<sup>57</sup> More principals have managed to find new funding for new initiatives in the past 3 years, but still only 29% could do so. Fewer principals in 2015 had needed to bring their school back from a deficit than in 2012.

<sup>57</sup> This figure may not include principals whose schools were knocked back by a crisis.

TABLE 21 Secondary principals' main school-related achievements in the past 3 years (2009, 2012 and 2015)

Achievement	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
School reputation remained good or improved	74	79	87
Retained/built a strengths-based school culture	*	55	65
School senior leadership team remained strong or got stronger	*	55	65
Roll remained stable or grew in a manageable way	65	61	63
Offered a good range of co-curricular activities	47	57	62
Building/grounds quality stayed good or improved	63	59	62
I remained optimistic	63	64	62
Strengthened processes for working with and consulting with parent/ whānau community	n/a	n/a	51
A crisis we experienced did not overwhelm us	34	38	39
Kept the ship afloat	39	31	31
Found new revenue to support new initiatives	24	22	29
Got school back into the black from a deficit	21	34	23

\*Not asked

In 2015, more decile 9–10 school principals noted improvements in buildings or grounds (83%). Fewer decile 1–2 and 3–4 school principals noted a strong senior leadership team (60% each, compared with 86% of decile 9–10 principals). Keeping the ship afloat was an accomplishment for decile 1–2 school principals (50%), more so than for the 12% of decile 7–8 school principals who noted this achievement, and 25% of the decile 9–10 school principals.

A prime responsibility of principals is to build and sustain a strong professional teaching culture. Table 22 shows that many secondary principals were now more focused on providing leadership opportunities for teachers, and building inquiry cultures. These inquiry cultures may be making more use of student assessment data to plan learning (79% of principals thought this was good or had improved over the past 3 years) than focusing on pedagogy—how to engage students best in good learning (62% of the principals thought they had achieved a more focused approach here in the past 3 years, a decrease since 2012). As we saw in *Chapter 3: Working with NCEA*, and in *Chapter 6: Teachers' perspectives on their work*, and will see in *Chapter 11: Issues facing secondary schools in 2015*, assessment was seen by principals and teachers as a dominating force in secondary teaching and learning.

Sixty-nine percent of the principals thought they had been able to keep the overall quality of teaching staff high or improved in 2015, an increase since 2012. This seems to be due to an increase in the recruitment of effective teachers, rather than retaining or building effective teachers, an area of principal achievement which had declined since 2012. The information in Table 22 raises some intriguing questions about the development of secondary school teaching capability.

TABLE 22 Secondary principals' main teacher and teaching-related achievements in the past 3 years (2009, 2012 and 2015)

Achievement	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Recruited effective teachers	75	64	79
Good/improved use of student assessment data to plan learning	*	76	79
Provided more leadership opportunities for teachers	*	53	74
Created a stronger professional learning and inquiry culture through learning teams	*	*	72
Overall quality of teaching staff stayed high or improved	67	57	69
More focused approach to pedagogy	*	71	62
Retained/built effective teachers	78	75	60
More positive working environment for teachers	*	*	54
Clearer "big picture" or coherence across departments' and year levels' teaching	*	*	51

\*Not asked

Student learning and wellbeing are at the heart of schools, and Table 23 below shows high proportions of principals seeing high or improving levels of student performance and behaviour as a reflection of the attention to these in their leadership role over the past 3 years. This may also reflect government support around behaviour through the PB4L policy and around achievement described in *Chapter 3: Working with NCEA*. Recent policy emphases are evident also in the high proportions who reported high or improving Māori student performance levels and the increase in those who reported an inclusive school culture for students with special needs. However, it is sobering that the marked increase between 2009 and 2012 in the proportion of secondary principals who saw improved or high Māori student performance has not continued: this indicates a need for greater support for schools to grow and share their effective practice for Māori student gains.

The lower proportion reporting high or improving Pasifika student performance levels is likely related to the very uneven spread of Pasifika students among secondary schools (71% have fewer than 7% Pasifika students, compared with only 8% of secondary schools having fewer than 7% Māori students).

The figures also show an increase in the proportion of principals reporting improvement in student attendance from 2009 to 2012, and then a plateau to 2015; principals whose schools already had high attendance were unlikely to have ticked this item. Improvements in student attendance were noted least by decile 9–10 school principals (19%), whose schools have high attendance rates.

TABLE 23 Secondary principals' main student-related achievements in the past 3 years (2009, 2012 and 2015)

Achievement	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Student performance levels stayed high or improved	74	75	88
Student behaviour stayed positive or improved	79	70	80
Increased focus on meeting individual students' or targeted groups' needs	*	*	75
Māori student performance levels stayed high or improved	58	71	73
Developed a safe and positive learning environment for students	*	*	67
Retained/built school culture inclusive of students with special needs	*	52	63
Developed student leadership roles	*	*	55
Increased students' ability to feed into decisions	*	*	50
Pasifika student performance levels stayed high or improved	*	*	46
Student attendance improved	27	33	34

\*Not asked

## Pathways to secondary principalship

Secondary principals have considerable experience in schools and classrooms before they take their first principalship. Most secondary principals had come to their role from senior school leadership roles (76% from being a deputy principal, 9% from being an assistant principal, 6% from being an associate principal). Four percent came to the principalship from being a head of faculty or department. A few came from ERO or tertiary institutions. Sixty-eight percent had spent at least 6 years in a senior school leadership role, and 72% had spent more than 15 years teaching in the classroom.

Around a quarter have also gained experience in other educational roles, primarily in PLD, as advisers in the now defunct Schools Support Service (8%) or as a tertiary teacher (5%). Four percent had worked for the Ministry of Education's local office and 2% in its national office; 3% had worked for ERO and 3% for another government agency such as NZQA. A few had worked as consultants.

As in 2009 and 2012, in 2015 many had been principal of only one school: 73%. Twenty percent had been principals of two schools and 5% of three or four schools.

In 2015, 28% of principals were in their first 3 years in the role, rather more than the 14% in 2012, but close to the 24% in 2009. Rural principals were more likely to be new to the role: five of the nine were in their first 3 years.

More principals had spent less than 3 years at their current school: 36%, compared with 22% in 2012 and 30% in 2009. At the other end of the scale, 16% had been principals for more than 15 years, the same as in 2012, but somewhat more than the 10% in 2009. Twenty percent had led their schools for more than a decade, a little less than the 24% in 2012, and much the same as the 18% in 2009.

Stability of school leadership is important, and principal turnover is a reasonable indicator of school health. In 2015, there were fewer schools that had kept their principal for 10 years (23%, compared with



29% in 2012 and 28% in 2009). Forty-seven percent had had two principals in the past decade and 21% had had three principals, both much the same as in 2012 and 2009. However, 9% of the schools had had four or more principals in that time, almost double the 5% in both 2012 and 2009. These schools had a higher proportion of new principals, as did those with three principals over the past decade (46% of principals of these schools had less than 3 years' experience in the role, compared with 20% of the principals in schools that had had more stable leadership, of one or two principals in the past decade).

This pattern raises some questions about the availability and selection of school principals. It would seem that boards of more stable schools attract an applicant pool with more experience, or select those with more experience, and boards of schools in challenging circumstances are likely to attract a less experienced pool. One plank of the Investing in Educational Success (IES) policy, the Principal Recruitment Allowance, provides for a substantial addition to principal salaries to attract highly experienced principals to challenging schools. It will be interesting to see what difference this makes to the pattern reported here. What will also be important is to ensure that those who get their first principal role in more challenging contexts get useful support.

## Support for the principal role

Quite a lot of Ministry of Education-funded support for principals over the 3 years 2013–15 actually came through NZSTA, supporting school governance responsibilities, including employment (see Table 24). This reflects the absence of a clear national school leadership strategy, and the loss of local School Support Services leadership advisers (40% used these in 2009; the replacement through Ministry of Education-contracted PLD was only able to be accessed by 17%). Use of the Educational Leaders website has dropped markedly since 2012. The First-Time Principals programme, and to a lesser extent the Aspiring Principals course, remained important contributors to principal development.<sup>58</sup> The proportion taking sabbaticals may indicate the attraction of time out from the school as well as the opportunity to focus on an issue that is relevant to the school's and the principal's development.

TABLE 24 **Secondary principals' Ministry of Education-funded support for their role over past 3 years (2009, 2012 and 2015)**

Support	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
NZSTA Human Resources and Industrial Relations advisers	68	67	63
Educational Leaders website	71	70	52
NZSTA Helpdesk	*	48	52
First-Time Principals' programme	43	37	40
NZSTA professional development	*	*	31
Sabbatical	*	33	30
Leadership and Assessment professional development	*	17	17
Aspiring Principals course	11	11	11

\*Not asked

<sup>58</sup> The 40% who ticked this item is likely to include most of the 28% who had less than 3 years of being a principal, and some of those who had had 3–5 years of being a principal.

Leadership and Assessment professional development was reported most often by principals of decile 3–4 and 5–6 schools (24% and 28% respectively, compared with 5% of decile 1–2 school principals and 3% of decile 9–10 school principals). Fewer decile 1–2 school principals had sabbaticals (10%). They also took part less in NZSTA professional development (20%) as did decile 9–10 principals (11%).

Most principals also used their own representative organisations, consultants (including former principals) and study to support their role (see Table 25). However, 9% had not used any of these sources of support over the past 3 years.

TABLE 25 Secondary principals' non-Ministry of Education-funded support for their role over past 3 years

Support	2015 (n = 182) %
Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand (SPANZ)	59
Private consultant/adviser—former principal	44
Private consultant/adviser—not former principal	30
PPTA	30
Postgraduate study	12
Nothing	9

Both groups at either end of the school decile range made less use than other principals of private consultants who were former principals (25% each). Decile 7–10 principals were less likely to have consulted former principals, and more likely to use other consultants).

Most principals (86%) also had contact with other principals. Meeting attendance was most frequent, with discussion of common issues and the provision of mutual support (see Table 26). The national picture was very much the same as in 2012. Closer professional work remained uncommon, and indeed the small proportion of principals working together in inquiry projects halved since 2012. Digital technology was also used by just a few to share and gain professional insight.

TABLE 26 Secondary principals' professional contact together; 2012 and 2015

Contact	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Attend regular meetings	81	75
Attend conference	73	68
Discuss common issues	62	64
Provide mutual support	60	60
Critical friendship based on structured visits to each other's schools	22	19
Mentor another principal	13	13
Mentored by another principal	13	11
Part of an inquiry project to improve practice	13	6
Online discussion forum	*	5
Use Twitter to get advice/ideas	*	4

\* not asked

Decile 1–2 school principals were less likely to have attended conferences (50%, compared with 82% of both decile 7–8 and decile 9–10 principals). Fewer decile 9–10 principals attended regular principal group meetings (69%).

Annual performance reviews are intended to provide principals with the opportunity to gain important feedback and challenge, to support their ongoing development and the development of the school. Table 27 shows that there is plenty of scope to make more of annual performance reviews, and that there has been little improvement in the usefulness of these since 2009.

TABLE 27 Gains from secondary principals' last annual performance review; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Gain	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Good acknowledgement of my contribution to the school	75	73	68
Agreement on goals that will move the school forward	50	58	60
Agreement on goals that will move me forward	47	55	53
Opportunity for frank discussion of challenges facing the school and joint strategic thinking	43	46	39
Opportunity for frank discussion of issues at the school and joint problem solving	37	36	38
New insight into how I could do things	32	31	26
Negative experience	n/a	5	5

Frank discussion of challenges facing the school and joint strategic thinking was experienced least often by decile 1–2 school principals (20%) and most often by decile 9–10 school principals (53%).

## Workload and morale

Only 2% of secondary principals reported working less than 50 hours a week. Thirty percent worked from 50 to 60 hours in an average week, and 18% between 61 to 65 hours a week. Forty-nine percent reported their work week as taking 66 hours or more, up slightly from 44% in 2012 and 45% in 2009. Decile 3–4 school principals had the highest proportion reporting working 66 hours or more a week (69%), and decile 9–10 school principals the lowest proportion (31%).

Stress levels also remained high, and have been much the same since 2009. In 2015, 39% of secondary principals reported high typical stress levels, and 5%, extremely high typical stress levels. Most principals reported some tiredness, but only 8% reported either constant tiredness that affected their performance, or feeling absolutely worn out, about the same as in 2012.

Around two-thirds described themselves as being healthy, and rarely getting sick, again much the same as in 2012. Few principals managed to follow the general fitness guidelines of 30 minutes or more exercise a day: 8% did so on 6 to 7 days during the week in which they did the national survey, 25% did so on 3 to 5 days that week and 45% on 1 or 2 days that week. Twenty-three percent had not undertaken any fitness activity that week.

Morale levels have slipped since 2012 and 2009. Fewer now described their morale as very good (33%, compared with 44% in 2012 and 45% in 2009). Twenty-two percent described their morale as less than good, compared with 19% in 2012 and 14% in 2009. The lowest morale levels were among decile 5–6 school principals (32% described their morale as less than good), and the highest among decile 9–10 school principals (8% described their morale as less than good).

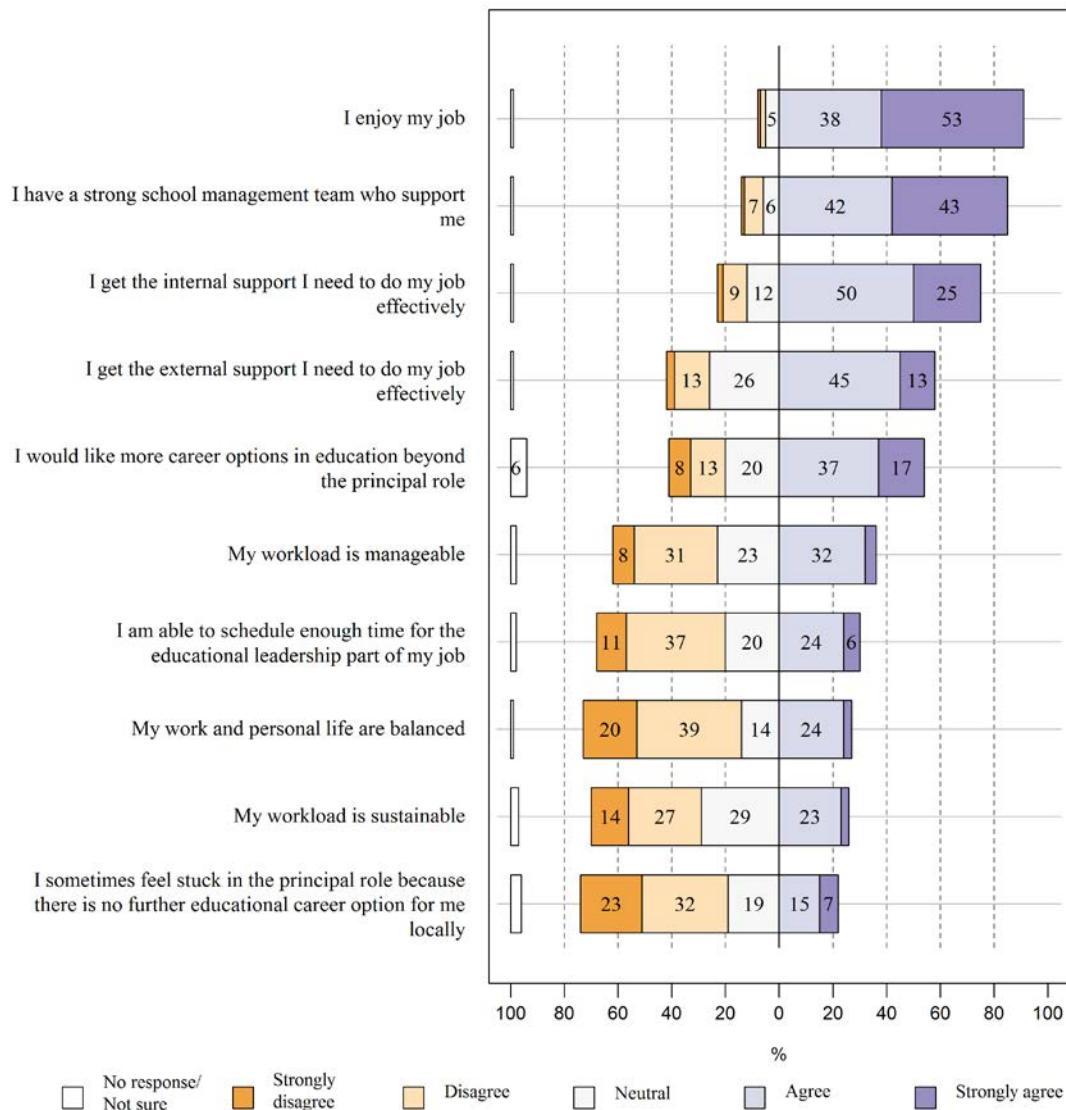
Levels of optimism about life and their role as a school principal have also slipped: only 26% described themselves as very optimistic in 2015, compared with 36% in 2012. Twenty-one percent were (only) occasionally optimistic, compared with 16% in 2012.

Figure 38 shows that secondary principals generally enjoyed their jobs in 2015, though many principals felt that their work and personal life were unbalanced, and 41% felt that their workload was not sustainable. These patterns have remained much the same since 2009. Only 30% thought they could schedule enough time for the educational leadership part of their job, though this has improved since the 19% who thought this in 2009. It was somewhat more than the 27% who thought so in 2012.

Most secondary principals felt supported by strong school management teams, and thought that they had the internal support they need to do their job effectively. Fifty-seven percent thought they had the external support they need.

As in 2009 and 2012, just over half wanted more career options in education beyond the principal role, and 22% felt stuck in the role without such local options. This is one of the costs of a system structured on stand-alone self-managed schools, with no districts or systematic ways of capitalising on principal experience to keep developing professional and school capability.

FIGURE 38 Secondary principals' views of their work (n = 182)



Fewer rural school principals strongly agreed that they enjoyed their job (three of the nine responding), with the same number saying they did not have the internal support they needed to do their job effectively. More decile 1–2 school principals disagreed that they could sustain their workload (60%).

### Changes principals would like in their work

Many secondary principals wanted more time to focus on the core of their role, educational leadership: the aspect that is most productive for student learning. Table 28 shows there was an increase since 2009 in those who sought a more balanced life. Yet there was also some decrease in those who want to reduce other kinds of demand on them. Just over a third wanted more professional dialogue about their work.

TABLE 28 Changes secondary principals would like in their work (2009, 2012, 2015)

Change	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
More time to focus on educational leadership	77	72	81
More time to reflect/read/be innovative	*	*	73
More balanced life	55	57	67
Reduce administration/paperwork	59	61	54
Higher salary	35	38	34
More professional dialogue about my work	35	38	34
Reduce property management/development demands	32	34	31
Reduce external agencies' demands/expectations	42	41	30
Reduce human resource management demands	39	35	30
Reduce parents and whānau demands	7	7	9
More productive relationship with board chair	*	*	6

\*Not asked

## Plans for the future

Table 29 shows that many secondary principals intended staying in their current school over the next 5 years. It also shows that if secondary principals felt the need to move on from being a principal, they were more likely to seek a job within education than leave it. Nineteen percent were thinking of retirement—a proportion that has remained much the same since 2009, even though in 2009, 19% were aged 60 or more, compared with 30% of secondary principals in 2015.

 TABLE 29 Likely career plan for secondary principals over next 5 years<sup>59</sup>; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Career plan	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Continue as principal of current school	65	65	62
Apply for study award/sabbatical/fellowship	34	36	32
Lead another school	22	14	23
Change to a different role within education	21	17	19
Retire	19	20	19
Take on a Community of Learning <sup>◇</sup> leadership role	*	*	12
Not sure	8	10	8
Retrain/change to a different career	7	5	4
Return to classroom teaching	4	2	2

\* Not asked

<sup>◇</sup> We asked about "Community of Schools" role, since that was what they were called when we sent the survey out.

Interest in leading another school was highest among rural principals (six of the nine responding).

<sup>59</sup> Just over half the principals gave more than one answer here, indicating they thought several pathways were possible, or that they were thinking of two pathways consecutively over the next 5 years.

### Summary and discussion

Secondary principals reported good levels of enjoyment of their role, but it remained a role with long work hours and high stress levels. Fortunately, principals reported good health, though they did not manage to exercise regularly.

Only 30% felt they could schedule enough time for the educational leadership part of their job: still low, though an improvement since 2009. Morale and optimism levels had slipped somewhat since 2012. Just over half the principals would like more career options beyond the principal role, and 22% felt stuck in the role.

Most secondary principals had experience in senior school leadership roles before they stepped up to the principalship. Most knew what it is like being a principal at only one school. However, there appeared to be fewer secondary schools that had kept the same principal for 10 years or more, and an increase to 9% of schools that had had four principals in the past 10 years. A further 21% of schools had had three or more principals in that period.

New principals were more likely to be heading some of the schools in the most challenging situations: with high principal turnover, and in rural areas. Answers from principals leading decile 1–2 schools also pointed to their having more challenges than others, and accessing somewhat less support.

Fewer principals were accessing Ministry of Education-funded support in 2015 than earlier, reflecting the absence of a clear national leadership strategy and the changes to professional learning and development. Indeed, NZSTA was the source used most. Sabbaticals refreshed 30% of the principals over the past 3 years. Principals also accessed support through their professional organisations and private consultants or advisers. Most also met other principals in meetings or conferences; but only a minority had worked closely with other principals, and the trend here has not improved since 2012. Annual performance reviews had also not improved their usefulness for ongoing principal (and school) development since 2009.

The picture principals painted of their achievements raises some interesting questions that need more exploration. On the one hand, there was work going on to improve senior school leadership and provide more leadership opportunities for teachers, and many thought they had recruited effective teachers. On the other, there was a drop in the number of principals who thought they had been able to retain or build effective teachers. The dominance of assessment that we saw in *Chapter 3: Working with NCEA* and in *Chapter 6: Teachers' perspectives on their work* is evident here too, with more principals recording achievement in using assessment to plan learning than in gaining a more focused approach to pedagogy, or more coherence across the teaching in different departments and year levels. We wonder if the stalling in the proportion of principals who noted improvement in Māori student achievement evident between 2009 and 2012 has something to do with the increased attention going to the use of assessment to plan learning, rather than its use to look at pedagogy, and aspects such as the quality of teacher–student interaction (emphasised in the effective Te Kotahitanga programme) and coherence for students.



## 8.

# Trustee perspectives and the work of school boards

**In the NZCER national surveys, we send two questionnaires via the school to the board chair. We ask the chair to give one questionnaire to another board member other than the principal or teacher representative, preferably one who might have a different view on some issues. Fifty-nine percent of those who responded in 2015 were board chairs, up from 49% in 2012.**

Board chairs tend to be longer serving (60% in the 2015 national survey had been on their board for 5 or more years, compared with 25% of other trustees), and to carry more responsibility, so it is likely that the picture here reflects these facts. However, on the whole, chairs and other trustees responding gave similar responses. Any marked differences in the views of chairs and other trustees are noted. Principals' and parents' views of the key elements in the role of boards, parents' and whānau views of their involvement in consultation and contact with their school board, and principals' views of how their school board is working, are also included here.

Our 2012 survey found particularly strong decile-related differences in trustee experiences and views, so we continue to analyse trustee responses in terms of school decile in 2015. We have added location as a variable of interest to see how experiences differ for rural trustees, whose schools are often smaller in size and further away from support. Bearing in mind the small number of rural trustees responding ( $n = 14$ ), we found some overlap of school decile and location, with 36% of the rural trustees responding to this survey coming from decile 1–2 schools, compared with 12% overall.

## Trustee experience and paths to the secondary trustee role

Secondary school trustees often came to their role with previous experience of serving on a primary or intermediate school board of trustees (BoT) (48%). Three percent of those who responded had also served on another secondary school's board. Sixty-one percent also had experience of serving on other organisational boards: 28% had been on the boards of non-government organisations employing staff, as school boards do; 25% on business boards; 22% on non-government organisations that did not employ staff; and 16% on the boards of other organisations. Board chairs had more experience on other boards: 33% had served on business boards, compared with 14% of other trustees, and 32% on the boards of voluntary organisations employing staff, compared with 21% of other trustees.

Experience on business boards was related to school socioeconomic decile, increasing from 11% of the decile 1–2 school trustees, to 40% of the decile 9–10 school trustees. Metropolitan trustees had more business board experience (31%, compared with 15% in small cities and in towns).

This picture of trustees' previous experience has remained stable over the 2009, 2012 and 2015 national surveys.

Most secondary trustees were also in paid employment, 58% as employees and 33% self-employed. Fewer trustees were self-employed in decile 1–2 schools (15%), and more were not in paid employment (22%, compared with 7% overall). This may relate to the higher proportion of decile 1–2 school trustees who were aged 60 or over (19%, compared with 7% overall).

Some support from their employment for their school trustee role was evident: 41% could use some paid time for their role, and 34% could use some work equipment. Thirty-seven percent could use work hours flexibly if they needed to for their school board work, so long as they put in their hours. Self-employed trustees had more flexibility here: 50% used some paid time, compared with 36% of employees, and 42% used some work equipment, compared with 29% of employees.

Compared with 2013 Census figures for the 40–59-year age group (40% of the trustees were in their forties, and 47% in their fifties) secondary trustees were much more highly qualified. Nationally, only 20% of this age group have a tertiary degree. More than half the secondary trustees responding had a tertiary degree, and only 2% had no qualification, compared with 20% nationally for this age group. Seventy-eight percent of the trustees in decile 9–10 schools have a tertiary degree, with the lowest proportion in decile 1–2 schools (37%).

Eighty-four percent of the trustees responding were NZ European/Pākehā, 14% were Māori and 2% from Pasifika cultures. Two percent were of Asian ethnicity and 7% identified with "other" ethnic groups.<sup>60</sup> Māori comprised 48% of the decile 1–2 school trustees responding, and 22% of the decile 3–4 school trustees.

More women took part in the 2015 national survey (52%, compared with 39% in 2012; nationally women comprise 46% of secondary trustees).

Trustees responding to the survey had been on their board for a median time of 3.75 years, somewhat less than the median time of 4.33 years found in the 2012 national survey. Board chairs had longer experience: a median of 5.17 years, compared with a median of 2.25 years for other board members.

Table 30 shows that the main driver for taking on school board responsibility was to contribute to the community. Just over a quarter wanted to improve their school's achievement levels. Not many went onto a school board to change things at the school, or because they felt the school lacks leadership. Table 30 also shows that the drivers or attractions of school board membership have been pretty stable over time, with some drop in those who wanted to change things, and some increase in those who had been

<sup>60</sup> Respondents could indicate affiliation with more than one ethnic group.

asked to come onto the board (indicating that boards were thinking strategically about their membership composition and numbers).

TABLE 30 Trustees' reasons for joining their secondary school board; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Reason	2009 (n = 267) %	2012 (n = 289) %	2015 (n = 232) %
To contribute to the community	85	78	83
To help my child/children	58	55	56
I have particular skills that are useful	*	56	54
I was asked	49	44	54
I wanted to learn how the school operated	*	*	28
I wanted to improve achievement levels	26	26	27
I wanted to change things at the school	22	16	12
Not many people were standing	*	*	8
Leadership at the school was lacking	8	5	6

\* Not asked

More board members who were not chairs mentioned that they had joined their school board because of particular skills they had (62%, compared with 49% of board chairs), or a desire to learn how the school operated (46%, compared with 15% of board chairs). Trustees from decile 3–4 schools had the highest proportion saying they joined their board to change things at the school (27%), or because leadership was lacking (20%). Rural trustees also showed interest in changing things at their school (six of the 14 responding).

## The role of boards

Much board work occurs in relation to meetings, which are often monthly. Board chairs work more closely with principals. Half of secondary trustees spent from 2 to 5 hours a week on their board work, much the same as in previous national surveys. Board chairs spent more time: only 10% carried out their role in 1 or 2 hours a week, compared with 54% of other trustees. A third of the chairs spent at least 6 hours a week in their role, an increase from the 26% who did so in 2012.

Table 31 below shows how parents (who vote for trustees), trustees and principals answered the question "What do you think are the key element(s) in the role of the board of trustees?" Providing strategic direction was foremost. Board members and parents had similar views. The pattern of principals' answers was similar, but with much higher proportions. Not many in all three groups saw that the board's role was to oversee the principal, and only a minority of parents and board members thought that the key element in the role of school boards is the employment of the school's principal. Reflecting the emphasis on school self-management since 1989, few saw that a key element in their school board's work was representing the government interest.

TABLE 31 Views on the key elements of the board of trustees' role

Key element of board role	Parents and whānau (n = 1,242) %	Trustees (n = 232) %	Principals (n = 182) %
Provide strategic direction for school	78	86	83
Support school staff/principal	52	46	78
Represent parents and whānau in the school	49	42	69
Oversee school finances	36	34	62
Scrutinise school performance	33	41	63
Employ school principal	22	30	51
Oversee school principal	20	16	31
Agent of government/representing government interest	10	5	8

Fewer parents at decile 1–2 schools identified providing the strategic direction for the school as a key element in the BoT role (56%), scrutinising school performance (13%) or overseeing the school finances (13%), compared with parents at all other schools. There were no decile-related differences among the trustees' and principals' answers here. Board chairs were more likely to mention:

- the scrutiny of school performance (47%, compared with 31% of other trustees)
- the employment of the school principal (37%, compared with 20%)
- the oversight of the principal (20%, compared with 10% of other trustees).

School location showed some relationships with perceptions of the key elements in the BoT role. Few metropolitan trustees identified overseeing the principal as a key element in the BoT role: 10%; trustees of schools in towns were most likely to identify this as a key element (29%).

Many secondary school trustees (71%) and principals (64%) thought that the amount of responsibility asked of school boards is about right; 24% of trustees and 31% of principals thought too much is asked of trustees. This pattern has stayed much the same since 2009.

More chairs than other trustees thought the amount of responsibility asked of school boards was too much: 29%, compared with 16%, a similar picture to 2012.

Two-thirds of the trustees made a comment on their responsibilities of their role. These comments included:

- the importance of having a good-calibre board, focused on governance (14%)
- the complexity and sometimes daunting nature of the role (12%)
- the importance of good partnership with the school principal (11%)
- time-consuming or time-pressured expectations of volunteers (8%)
- the sense that the responsibilities of the role were not matched by what trustees could control (6%).

What secondary school boards spent most of their time on was related to the emphasis they give to providing a strategic direction to the school. When we asked trustees to rank a range of board activity by the amount of time spent on it, student progress and achievement topped the list (see Figure 39). Attention to financial management and property/maintenance followed.

FIGURE 39 Main activities of boards in terms of time,<sup>61</sup> reported by trustees (n = 232)

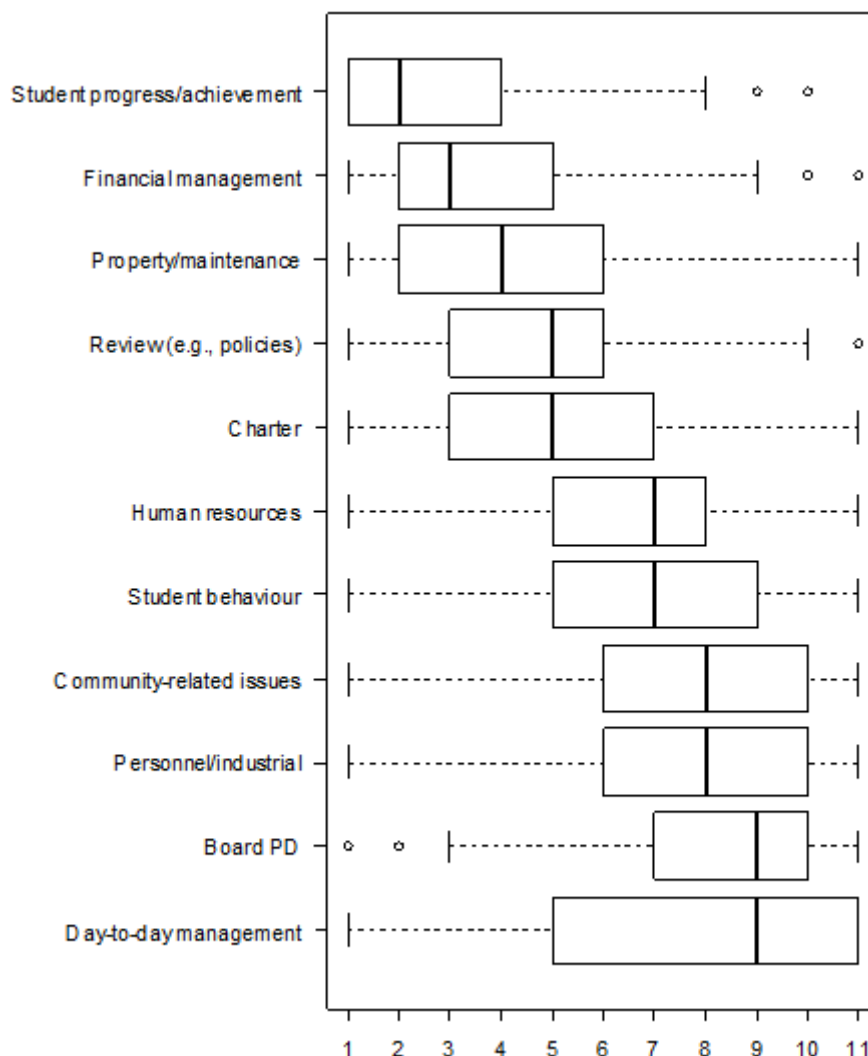


Figure 39 shows also the wide range between boards in how much time they gave to particular aspects of their role (or, in the case of day-to-day management, what they should not be doing as the school's governing body). Thus almost all the aspects we asked about have at least one trustee saying that was what their board spent most of its time on over the past year, and most aspects have at least one trustee saying that was what their board spent most time on.

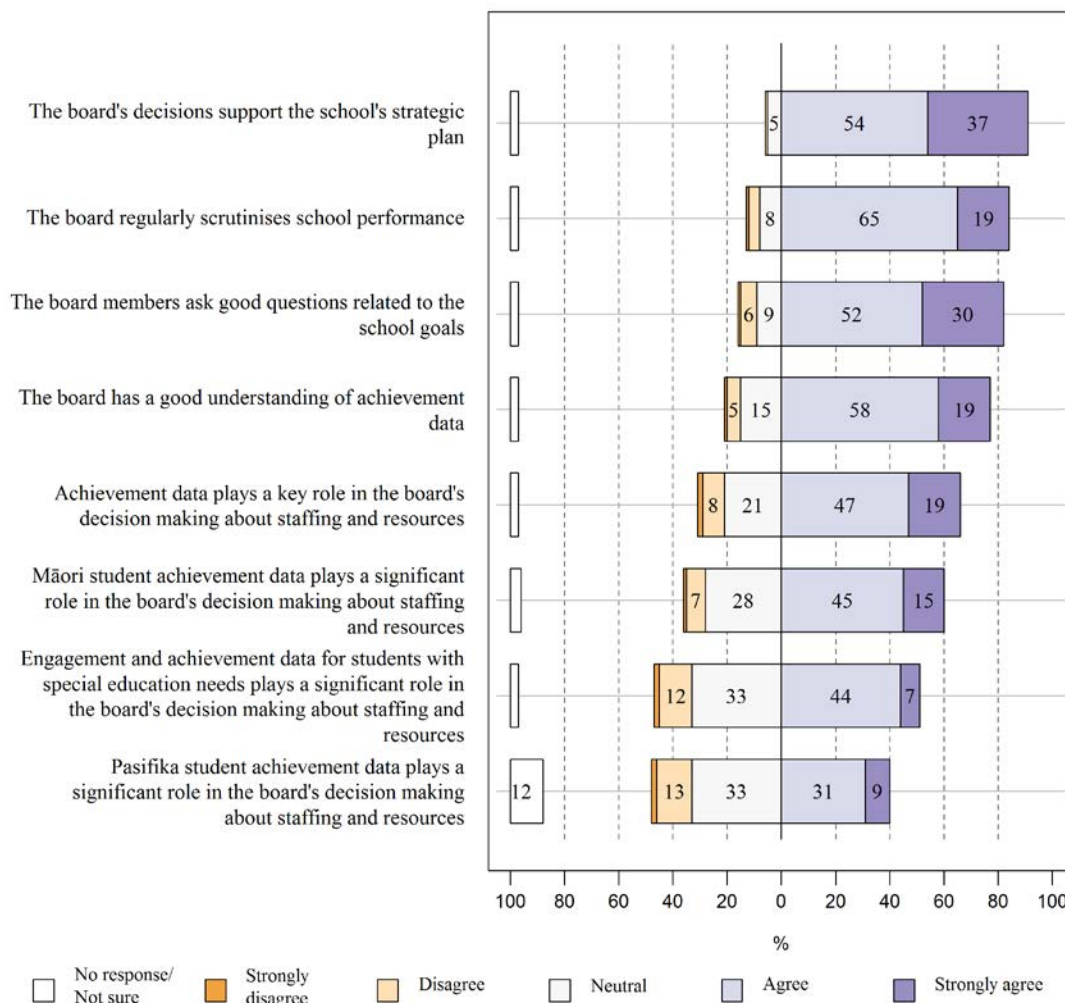
Financial management was identified among the top three areas that boards gave time to more by trustees in decile 7–10 schools (varying between 68 to 70%), and least often by trustees in decile 1–2 schools (30%). This may be related to the latter being most likely to identify a lack of financial expertise on their board. Student behaviour occupied less board time for trustees in decile 7–10 schools (8 to 10% put this among their top three areas, compared with a range of 19 to 24% for trustees in decile 1–6

<sup>61</sup> In order of the median ranking given. The figure is a “box and whiskers” graph, with the line in the middle of the box showing the median ranking (on a scale of 1–11), and the left hand side of the box indicating the spread of the 25% of scores above the median, and the right hand side of the box indicating the spread of 25% of scores below the median, with the single bars indicating the full range, and dots, extreme outliers.

schools). Trustees in decile 1–4 schools were giving priority to their own board professional development: 15–20% included this in one of their top three areas, compared with none of the decile 9–10 school trustees.

We asked principals, as the school’s professional leader employed by the board, for their perspectives on how their board worked. Figure 40 shows that most secondary principals saw their boards actively paying attention to achievement data in both their scrutiny of school performance and decision making about resource allocation. This was more at the “agree” than “strongly agree” level.

FIGURE 40 Principal views of their board’s scrutiny and decision making (n = 182)



## Achievements

Student achievement and financial management also headed the set of achievements that trustees could identify for their board over the past year: as they did in 2012 and 2009, in similar proportions. Table 32 shows some interesting patterns since 2009 that also present some puzzles. Why, for example, did only a quarter of trustees report an improvement in their school's student behaviour in 2015, compared with 42% who said so in 2012, and the 35% in 2009? Is it that earlier efforts have paid off? (The decline in the proportion of trustees identifying student behaviour as an issue (see Table 51 in *Chapter 13: Issues facing secondary schools in 2015*) would back this interpretation.) Why has the proportion of trustees who think they have maintained the range of courses their school provides halved? Why has the proportion of trustees reporting improvement in Māori student achievement not increased since 2012, when this has been a government priority area? Overall, are the initiatives in the secondary sector coherent? Why is it that fewer than half of trustees felt that their board had made progress on their school targets over the past year? Was it the nature of the targets? Or perhaps this response reflects information trustees had (or did not have) to judge.

TABLE 32 Trustees' views of their board's main achievements; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Board main achievements over past year	2009 (n = 267) %	2012 (n = 289) %	2015 (n = 232) %
Good financial monitoring	65	71	67
Improvements in student progress and achievement <sup>#</sup>	63	63	61
Greater focus on student achievement	65	55	59
Improved our governance processes	*	*	55
More use of digital technology in learning	*	42	55
Quality of teaching stayed high or improved	46	57	50
Improved our buildings <sup>~</sup>	55	59	49
Improvements in Māori student progress and achievement <sup>#</sup>	42	49	47
Made progress on our school targets	*	49	46
Effective review of the school charter	*	*	43
Good ERO report	55 <sup>◇</sup>	39	37
Improved the pathways we provide students in terms of qualifications	*	25	31
Improvements in Pasifika student progress and achievement <sup>#</sup>	16	24	29
Improved our board capability through professional development and advice	*	*	27
Improvements in student behaviour	35	42	26
Improvements in student attendance	*	27	25
Community/parent involvement in student learning increased	*	*	20
Maintained the range of courses we can provide	*	39	19
Appointed a new principal	19	16	15

\*Not asked

~ 2009 and 2012 item asked about "buildings and grounds"

# 2009 and 2012 item asked about student achievement

◇ This predates ERO's 2009–10 introduction of differentiated reviews and the 4–5-year review return category.



Improvements in student attendance were noted most by trustees of decile 1–4 schools (about 40%). Increased community/parental involvement in learning was noted most by trustees of decile 1–2 schools (37%). Maintaining the school's range of courses was noted most as a board achievement by decile 5–6 school trustees (33%) and by decile 9–10 school trustees (25%). A higher proportion of decile 1–2 school trustees noted new appointments of principals (37%). Good ERO reports were noted most by trustees from decile 7–10 schools (48%).

Fewer rural trustees noted achievements than others, though they were ahead in noting improvements in their board capability through professional development (seven of the 14).

### Consultation with the school's community

Although community-related issues appeared toward the end of the list of what boards spend most of their time on, boards are legally required to consult with their communities, and this informs their strategic thinking.

Most of the trustees (82%) said their board had consulted with the school's community in the past 12 months:

- Public meetings or workshops at the school (55% of trustees), and written surveys of parents and whānau (54%) were the most common means of consulting.
- Email surveys were more common: 39% in 2015, up from 25% in 2012.
- Boards had also invited parents and whānau to board meetings or workshops (34% of trustees), included questions in the school newsletter (27%), held public meetings or workshops in the community (21%, up from 15% in 2012) and met with specific groups of parents (e.g., families of students with special needs) (21%, up from 12% in 2012).
- Nineteen percent of trustees said their board consulted through a hui. Hui occurred most in decile 1–2 schools (55% of trustees).
- Phone surveys were not common (9% of trustees), nor were home meetings (7%).

As with many other organisations that consult their stakeholders, a minority of these stakeholders participated in consultation. Twenty-five percent of the trustees said approximately 10% or fewer of their school's parents had taken part in their board's consultation, 23% said 11–25% had taken part and 15% said between 26–50%. Just a few said they had had more than half their parents participate (7%).<sup>62</sup> A higher proportion of decile 1–2 school trustees reported this high level of parent participation (23%).

Forty percent of the trustees thought their board's consultation methods were generally successful, and 38% thought some of the methods had been successful.

Just under half the parents who responded to our parent survey said they felt genuinely consulted by their school, an increase from the 41% who felt this in 2012, and the 34% who felt this in 2009. A further 26% were unsure about this. Somewhat more decile 9–10 school parents felt genuinely consulted (57%).

Thirty-five percent of parents thought they did not have enough contact with their school's BoT. (We did not ask for comments here, but in previous surveys parents have mentioned their own lack of time as a factor, as well as wishing their school board to communicate more.) Feeling they did not have enough contact with their school trustees was highest among decile 1–2 school parents (54%), decreasing to 31% of decile 9–10 school parents.

Student achievement, reporting to parents and whānau, and working with parents and whānau top the list of things that secondary boards consulted their school community about. However, the figures for these are not high, indicating that each school's consultation was quite contextual. Table 33 shows the wide range of issues that school boards consulted on.

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62 A quarter did not know what proportion of parents had participated.

TABLE 33 **School community consultation, reported by secondary trustees (n = 232)**

<b>34–27% of trustees reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student achievement</li> <li>Reporting to parents and whānau</li> <li>Curriculum options</li> <li>School charter</li> </ul>
<b>25–21%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School culture</li> <li>Provision for Māori</li> <li>Health and wellbeing</li> <li>School uniform</li> </ul>
<b>19–14%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of digital technology</li> <li>Student pathways to qualifications</li> <li>Student attendance</li> <li>Student behaviour</li> <li>Student safety</li> </ul>
<b>13–11%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision for Pasifika</li> <li>School trips</li> <li>Property</li> <li>Co-curricular activities</li> </ul>
<b>9–5%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on annual plan target/goals</li> <li>Sex education</li> <li>Local iwi education priorities</li> <li>Incorporating te reo and tikanga Māori</li> <li>Timetabling</li> <li>Becoming part of a CoS</li> <li>Enrolment scheme</li> <li>Funding</li> <li>Provision for students with special needs</li> <li>Provision for students with English as a second language</li> </ul>

Trustees from decile 1–2 schools were more likely to report that their board had consulted on student achievement (55%), attendance (50%), pathways to qualifications (46%) and safety (32%). Only metropolitan schools consulted on their enrolment scheme.

### **Issues raised by parents**

Parents also raise issues themselves with boards: 70% of the trustees had experience of this in the 2015 year. These issues were also quite wide ranging. Student behaviour and dissatisfaction with a staff member were most likely to be raised, as they were in the 2009 and 2012 national secondary surveys, this year in somewhat higher proportions.

TABLE 34 **Issues raised by parents with their secondary school board, reported by trustees**  
(*n* = 163)

<b>Top issues</b>	Student behavior (47% of trustees where parents had raised issues, 35% in 2012, 43% in 2009) Dissatisfaction with staff member (44%, 27% in 2012, 31% in 2009)
<b>29–15% of trustees</b>	School uniform Costs for parents and whānau Provision for students with special educational needs Digital technology Student achievement
<b>14–12%</b>	Provision for Māori students Funding Health and safety Curriculum (14%, up from 6% in 2012 and 7% in 2009) Placement of students Transport (12%, up from 7% in 2012, and same as 12% in 2009)
<b>9–5%</b>	School zone Grounds/maintenance NCEA Co-curricular provision Theft/vandalism Class sizes

Student achievement was reported as an issue raised by parents by a higher proportion of decile 1–2 school trustees (50%). Other parent-raised issues reported more often by decile 1–2 school trustees were theft or vandalism (25%), and provision for Pasifika students (20%, compared with 3% overall). Provision for students with special needs was identified as an issue raised by parents by a higher proportion of decile 3–4 school trustees (38%).

Dissatisfaction with a staff member was a parent-raised issue for a higher proportion of town trustees (71%).

## Board capability

Both trustees and principals were positive about how well their school board was doing, though more principals than trustees saw their board at either end of the spectrum of how well they were undertaking the responsibilities of a school board. Few principals or trustees saw their boards as (simply) coping or struggling. This picture has remained much the same since 2009.

TABLE 35 Trustee and principal views of how their board is doing

View	On top of its task %	Making steady progress %	Coping or struggling %
Trustees ( <i>n</i> = 232)	34	57	6
Principals ( <i>n</i> = 182)	41	46	12

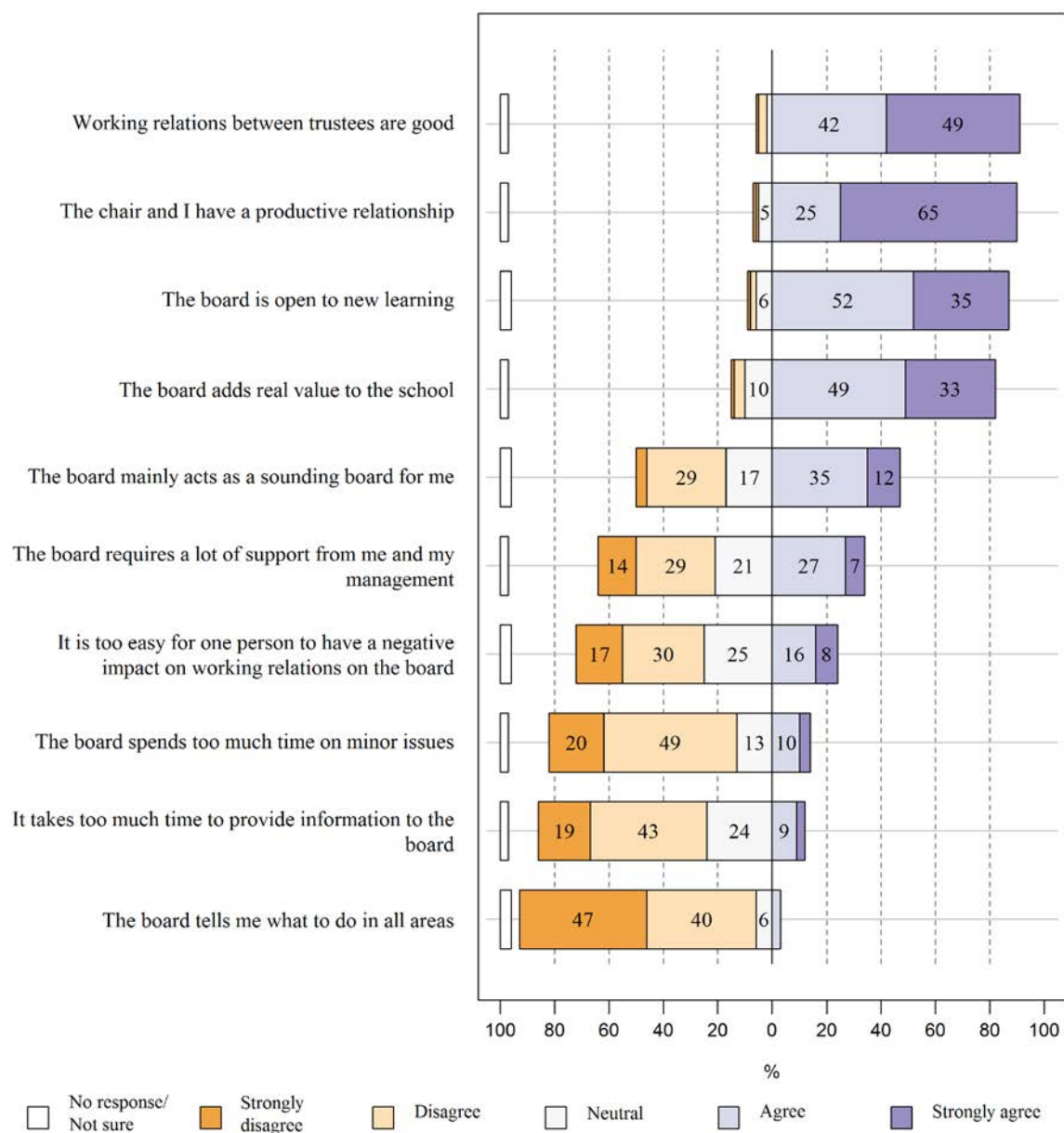
Only 5% of decile 1–2 school principals thought their board was on top of its task, compared with 61% of decile 9–10 school principals. School location was also related: only 11% of rural school principals thought this, compared with 50% of metropolitan school principals.

Among trustees, there was no difference related to school decile, but there was a similar difference related to school location: three of the 14 rural school trustees saw their board as simply coping, as did 15% of those in towns, compared with 6% of trustees of small city schools and 3% of those in metropolitan schools.

Forty-one percent of trustees said their board regularly reviewed its own processes, as recommended, and 47% said they did this sometimes. This is much the same as in 2012 and 2009.

Figure 41 shows that most principals saw their school board adding real value to the school, and focusing on the issues that matter. Relationships were largely productive between the school's professional leader and board chair. However, around a third saw their board as needing a lot of support.

FIGURE 41 Principals' views of their board (n = 182)



While principals' views were largely unrelated to their school decile, decile 9–10 school principals were the most positive about their school board in these key respects:

- 69% strongly agreed that working relations between trustees were good (decreasing to 30% of decile 1–2 principals)
- 56% strongly agreed that the board added real value to the school (decreasing to 21% of decile 3–4 school principals, and 25% of decile 1–2 school principals)
- 53% strongly agreed that the board's decisions supported the school's strategic plan (decreasing to 24% of decile 3–4 school principals, and 25% of decile 1–2 school principals)
- 44% strongly agreed that board members asked good questions related to school goals (decreasing to 10% of decile 1–2 school principals).

A higher proportion of decile 1–2 school principals strongly agreed that it was too easy for one person to have a negative impact on the board's working relations (25%).

Just over half the secondary principals (52%) had struck some problem in their relationships with members of their school board during their time as a principal. This was slightly more than in 2012, but much the same as in 2009. Most of these problems were minor (31% with their current board, 4% at a previous school). Fifteen percent overall had struck major problems in their relationships with members of their school board, including 12% at their current school, and 4% at their previous school.<sup>63</sup> Consistent with the more positive responses given by decile 9–10 school principals about their current board, none of those experiencing major problems currently were from decile 9–10 schools.

We also asked principals about what they had gained from their last annual performance appraisal, which is the board's responsibility. This is reported in *Chapter 7: Principals' perspectives on their work*. A higher proportion of decile 9–10 school principals had been able to frankly discuss the school's challenges and do some joint strategic thinking through this process than others (53%, decreasing to 20% of decile 1–2 school principals).

## Board numbers and expertise

The smallest number of board members other than the principal, the staff representative and student representative was four, with a median number of six and a maximum of 13. Two-thirds of the trustees said their board had co-opted at least one of its members. Trustees from decile 7–10 schools reported larger boards: only 18% had four to five elected or co-opted members, compared with 31 to 42% for trustees from decile 1–6 schools. This difference may reflect the higher proportion of integrated schools among the decile 7–10 schools, since integrated schools had more trustees (a median of nine, compared with six trustees for state schools). In terms of locality, town trustees reported the fewest numbers on their board (52% had four to five members).

Twenty percent of the trustees said their board had all the expertise it needed. Experience or skills that were lacking ranged widely, again indicating particular local contexts and board composition. Higher proportions of trustees in 2015 than in 2012 mentioned a lack of expertise in strategic planning, community consultation, understanding achievement data, links with local employers and property (between 16–20% in 2015, and 11–15% in 2012). Financial expertise continues to be most mentioned (23%), along with links with local iwi (22%) and legal expertise (21%).

Decile 1–2 school trustees were more likely to say that their board lacked experience or skills in finance (52%), strategic planning (44%), community consultation (41%), understanding achievement data (37%), links with local iwi (37%), review of school performance (37%), governance (33%), the employer role (30%) and leadership (22%).

Rural trustees were more likely to see gaps for their board in the areas of property (six of the 14 responding), governance (six), understanding achievement data (six), finance (five), review of school performance (five), strategic planning (five) and the employer role (four).

## Support for the trustee role

Almost all the trustees (91%) had some ready access to information at their school to help them in their role. School leadership played a key role here: the principal was a source of regularly shared relevant new information and reports from government (79%), and useful background material for key decisions the board was making (73%). Many, but not all, were on boards that had a policy framework (72%).

<sup>63</sup> Some principals had struck problems with their board at both their current and previous schools.

Half could access information they needed online. Forty-seven percent were on boards that gave new members an induction folder; 44% could look at archives or records of previous board papers. Only 17% belonged to boards that had a library of relevant material (perhaps reflecting the dominance of online material).

Trustees were also supported over the past 12 months within their school by guidance and information from fellow trustees (66%, a marked increase from the 42% who reported this in 2012), and from school staff members (66%, increased from 55% in 2012). Discussions with ERO during their review of the school were helpful for 39%. Thirty-four percent had used the NZSTA government-funded helpdesk (45% of board chairs and 18% of other trustees had done so). Twenty-two percent had regular contact with trustees in other schools.

Most of the trustees responding (84%) had also had some form of professional development for their role over the past 12 months. Sixty-two percent had participated in NZSTA-provided and mainly government-funded professional development as shown in Table 36.

TABLE 36 Trustee participation in NZSTA-provided workshops and professional development

NZSTA workshops and professional development	(n = 232) %
Board's role in student achievement	32
Finance	16
Hautū tool (cultural responsiveness)	16
NZSTA provider worked with school	15
Policy framework	15
Employer role	15
NZSTA annual conference	15
Principal performance management	14
Board chair residential programme	14
Online modules	10

Trustees also gained knowledge and skills for their governance role through professional development in their paid work (41%). Just 8% had gone on other courses or had mentoring or coaching paid for by their school. Other sources mentioned were other NZSTA professional development (8%), Catholic Education Office (3%) and through non-governmental organisation (NGO) or voluntary work (2%).

More board chairs than other trustees took part in NZSTA-funded professional development on principal performance management, finance and policy framework; and more board chairs also had access to relevant learning through their paid work. A quarter had undertaken NZSTA's board chair residential programme.

Trustees in decile 1–2 schools had the highest proportion of NZSTA conference attendance (33%). More of decile 1–2 and decile 3–4 school trustees, which also have higher Māori enrolment than higher decile schools, had taken part in workshops introducing the Hautū tool (26%). Rural trustees had the highest proportion participating in the principal performance management workshop (six of the 14 responding).



Government-funded advice from NZSTA was also a prime support. Over the past year, 36% of trustees had had advice from an NZSTA Human Resources adviser on their school policies (46% of board chairs, and 21% of other trustees), and 35% had sought advice from an NZSTA Industrial Relations adviser (46% of board chairs, and 18% of other trustees).

ERO was a source of advice for 33%, as was the regional Ministry of Education office for 32%. Professional development in their paid work was another source of advice for the governance role (34%: 41% of board chairs and 24% of other trustees). A quarter had worked as a whole board with a contracted adviser paid for by their school. Four percent had had individual coaching or mentoring paid for by their school.

A higher proportion of decile 1–2 school trustees had had advice from ERO (63%), probably reflecting their ERO review report levels (see *Chapter 11: Support and Challenge* and had worked with a contracted adviser (44%), probably reflecting their priority for support.

Thirteen percent said they had received no advice for their trustee role over the past year. A greater proportion of small city trustees said they had not had advice for their role (27%).

Only 5% of secondary trustees said professional development and advice for their role over the past 12 months had had no impact or not changed anything much, though 45% said that their experiences had affirmed what they were already doing. Table 37 shows that this work with experts beyond their own school was important for many trustees in terms of understanding their responsibilities; and for a minority, in terms of important decisions they needed to make.

TABLE 37 **Impact for trustees of professional development and advice**

Impact	(n = 232) %
Better understanding of trustee role	53
Affirmed what we were already doing	45
Ensured our board processes were compliant with the law	41
Improved our strategic planning	41+
Better understanding of the board's role as employer	36+
Better understanding of how to review school progress	32
Better understanding of the achievement information we get from school staff	28
Helped us resolve a difficult situation	28
Helped us improve our annual planning and reporting	26
Better understanding of the financial information we get from school staff	17
Helped us make some hard decisions/avoid some costly mistakes	17+
Helped us with our consultation processes	15
Helped us appoint a new principal	12+

+ Increase since 2012

Decile 1–2 school trustees were most likely to note impact from advice and professional development in terms of a gaining better understanding of how to review school progress (59%), of the financial information from school staff (33%) and help with consultation processes (30%).

With regard to school location, more rural school trustees thought they had a better understanding of how to review school progress (eight of the 14), of achievement information (seven of the 14) and of financial information from school staff (five of the 14). A higher proportion of small city trustees said they also had a better understanding of achievement information (42%), and of the financial information (31%). More town trustees had used their professional development and advice to resolve a difficult situation (40%). Some of these differences are likely to reflect NZSTA targeting of its professional development and support.

NZSTA, the Ministry of Education and ERO have all published guidance for school boards; much of it overlapping, or exemplifying core principles applied to different priority areas. National reports produced by the Ministry of Education, ERO and NZQA are also useful sources of information and understanding. Table 38 shows that the most used written resources were those that come regularly from NZSTA. NZSTA resources are in bold in the table, and Ministry of Education material in italics; ERO resources are underlined. Overall, 89% of trustees had used one or more NZSTA resource, 57% had used one or more Ministry of Education resource and 41% one or more ERO resource.

TABLE 38 **Trustees' use of written resources in past 12 months**

<b>Most used</b>	<b>STANews</b> (70%) <b>STA email memos</b> (43%)
<b>38–26% use</b>	<b>Trusteeship</b> <b>Trustee handbook</b> <i>Working in partnership</i> <i>How boards work</i> <b>Hautū tool</b>
<b>22–16%</b>	NZQA Internet material Material on good governance from beyond education <u>ERO indicators</u> <u>ERO national reports on secondary education</u> <i>Effective governance: supporting education success as Māori</i> <b>Guidelines for principal appointment</b> Bullying prevention and response
<b>12–11%</b>	<i>Effective governance: building inclusive schools</i> <i>Effective governance: supporting Pasifika success</i> <u>School trustees: Helping you ask the right questions.</u> NZQA annual reports <u>Wellbeing guidelines</u>

Interestingly, while student behaviour was not identified as a major issue facing their school by decile 9–10 trustees (see Table 13, *Chapter 5: Supporting students' wellbeing*), use of the wellbeing guidelines and bullying prevention and response report was highest among this group (28% and 38% respectively).

A higher proportion of board chairs than other trustees had read these resources: STA email memos (54%), Hautū tool (31%), ERO national reports on secondary education (27%), material on good

governance in other sectors (26%), Bullying prevention and response (23%) and Guidelines for principal appointment (23%).

## Changes to the trustee role

Would trustees like to change anything about their role? Only 6% sought no change. More funding for their school topped the list (but at a much lower proportion than in 2009 when it was 82%; in 2012 it was 57%), followed by improvements in their knowledge or training. A related theme was the desire for more guidance and support, on matters beyond those that are NZSTA's responsibility. Another theme was matching time and expectations to what can be achieved. Both are about wanting to make the trustee role more effective.

As with trustees' responses to other questions in this survey, we see a wide range of perspectives, reflecting differences in school and personal situations.

TABLE 39 Main changes trustees would make in their role

Change	(n = 232) %
More funding for the school	55
Improve my knowledge or training	35
Work more with other schools	29
Reduce Ministry expectations of what we can provide for the funding we get	28
More advice about modern learning environments	27
More time to focus on strategic issues	26
More support from parents and whānau	23
More guidance on how to use achievement data to inform board decision making	23
More support/advice from independent education experts	22
More support/advice from Ministry of Education	19
Clearer distinction between governance and management	18
Reduce community expectations of what we can provide for the funding we get	18
More remuneration	18
Better information from school staff to inform our decisions	17
Clearer guidelines to make disciplinary decisions	15
Better communication between board members	11
Reduce workload/paperwork	11
Reduce role in disciplinary decisions	9
Reduce expectations for community consultation	5
More support/advice from NZSTA	5

The pattern here has remained largely consistent since 2009, with the exception of reduced emphasis on more funding, and a reduced emphasis on reducing Ministry of Education expectations (42% of trustees wanted this in 2009, decreasing to 28% in 2012).

A higher proportion of board chairs were interested in having more time to focus on strategic issues (34%, compared with 16% of other trustees). A higher proportion of trustees who were not board chairs were interested in improving their knowledge or training (44%, compared with 29% of board chairs), in having more support from parents and whānau (30%, compared with 18%), more guidance on how to use achievement data to inform board decision making (30%, compared with 18%) and better communication between board members (17%, compared with 7%).

Decile 1–2 school trustees were the most interested in changes: 63% wanted to improve their knowledge or training, 56% to have more support from parents and whānau, 41% to have more guidance on how to use achievement data to inform board decision making, 37% to have better information from school staff to inform decisions,<sup>64</sup> 26% to have better communication between board members and 15% more support/advice from NZSTA.

Rural trustees showed more interest in changes that would improve their knowledge and training (50%), and give them better information from school staff (43%). They and town trustees were also more interested in having support from independent experts (29% and 35% respectively), and more support from parents and whānau (29% and 37% respectively). Town trustees were more interested in reducing Ministry of Education expectations of them (40%).

Forty percent of trustees intended standing again at the next BoT election (for many schools, in May 2016), and a further 28% were unsure. Overall, the picture of interest in continuing in the role was much the same as in 2012 and 2009.

### Summary and discussion

Secondary school BoTs drew on parents and others who are motivated primarily by wanting to contribute to their community. Many bring with them other governance experience, through serving on primary school boards, NGOs or business boards. As a group, they have a high qualification level. Almost all are in paid employment. A significant minority can use or give themselves some support from their employment for their trustee role.

While just over half the trustees spent less than 2 hours a week on their role, a third of the board chairs gave at least 6 hours a week to their role. A higher proportion of board chairs thought the amount of responsibility asked of school boards was too much (29%, compared with 16% of other trustees). Thirty-one percent of principals also thought too much was asked of boards.

Trustees, parents and principals all identified that the main key element in the role of boards is to provide strategic direction for the school, followed by supporting the school staff or principal. Only a minority of trustees and parents thought that the key elements included overseeing the school principal, or representing the government interest.

Consistent with the main focus on strategic direction, student progress and achievement topped the list of the things boards generally spent their time on, followed by financial management and property/maintenance. Most principals reported that their board's decisions supported the school's strategic plan, that the board regularly scrutinised school performance and asked good questions related to school goals, with achievement data playing a key role in board decision making about staffing and resources.

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<sup>64</sup> Decile 3–4 school trustees also showed more interest than others, 29%; decile 9–10 trustees showed least interest in getting better information from school staff, 5%.

Most boards consulted with their school community over the year, through a range of means. More parents felt genuinely consulted by their school board in 2015 than previously. Student achievement and reporting to and working with parents and whānau were the main topics of consultation in what is a wide-ranging set of topics, indicating that each school's consultation with its community is quite contextual.

Parents also raised issues themselves with most of the trustees' boards. These issues are also wide ranging, with student behaviour and dissatisfaction the most common issues, and raised more in 2015 than previously.

Most trustees and principals are positive about how well their school board is doing, with only 6% of trustees and 12% of principals seeing their board as coping or struggling.

Most principals see their school board as adding real value to the school, and focusing on the issues that matter. Relationships are largely productive between the school's professional leader and board chair. However, around a third saw their board as needing a lot of support from the school staff.

Twenty-three percent of the trustees said their board had all the expertise it needed. Experience or skills that were lacking ranged widely, again indicating particular local contexts and board composition. More trustees in 2015 than in 2012 mentioned a lack of expertise in strategic planning, community consultation, understanding achievement data, links with local employers and property (between 16–20% in 2015, and 11–15% in 2012). Financial expertise continues to be most mentioned (23%), along with links with local iwi (22%) and legal expertise (21%).

Trustees reported internal support and information for their role from the principal and other school staff, and each other. They also used written resources from NZSTA (89%), the Ministry of Education (57%) and ERO (51%).

Most had had some form of professional development for their trustee role over the past year, mainly through NZSTA-provided and largely government-funded workshops and courses (62%), and through their own paid work (41%). Around a third had also had advice from NZSTA, ERO and the regional office of the Ministry of Education. Almost all who had had some external professional development or advice for their role saw a positive impact in terms of understanding their responsibilities and, for a minority, in terms of important decisions they needed to make.

Many trustees would like to improve their effectiveness, and the main changes they sought were for more guidance and support on matters beyond NZSTA's role, and a better match of time and expectations to what they can achieve.

While there are many school-specific differences evident in trustee responses, school socioeconomic decile persists as a factor associated with some marked differences in the confidence and capability of boards, and the issues they are faced with. Rural school boards also seem to have some gaps in their confidence and capability.

# 9.

## Parent and whānau perspectives

**The parent and whānau surveys represent a cross-section of all parents of secondary school students in New Zealand, with sufficient numbers of parents with different social characteristics, such as ethnicity and qualification levels, to check for differences in experiences and views.<sup>65</sup>**

Looking at the characteristics of the 1,242 parents and whānau who responded, most were women (82%). Age-wise, the biggest group was between the ages of 40 and 49 (57%), with a further 27% between 50 and 59 years. Seventy-five percent identified themselves as NZ European/Pākehā, 10% as Māori, 8% as Asian and 4% as Pasifika. An additional 12% of parents and whānau identified with other ethnicities, including African, Middle Eastern, Latin American, European, 'New Zealander' and 'Kiwi'. Three percent chose not to answer this question. Approximately 36% had degree qualifications (in metropolitan schools, a slightly higher 42% of the parents had degrees). Five percent of all respondents had no formal qualification.

The survey comprised mostly closed-response questions focused on their youngest child at the school (if they had more than one child there, as did 28% of parents<sup>66</sup>). Twelve percent of parents indicated they had a child in Year 7 or 8<sup>67</sup>; around 26% had a child in Year 9, 10 or 11; 22% had a child in Year 12; and 16% had a child in Year 13 or above.

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65 Parent and whānau surveys were sent to 32 schools, along with guidelines for distributing them randomly to every fifth family with a student attending the school. These schools were an approximately representative sample of all New Zealand state and state-integrated secondary schools. Approximately one-quarter of the surveys were completed, resulting in returns that do not replicate our original school sample. This gives an under-representation of parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school. Details of the school characteristics with which the parent sample is associated are included in Appendix 1.

66 Twenty-three percent of parents had two children at their school, 4% had three children there and 1% had four children or more at their school.

67 The secondary schools in the sample included Years 7–15 schools as well as Years 9–15.

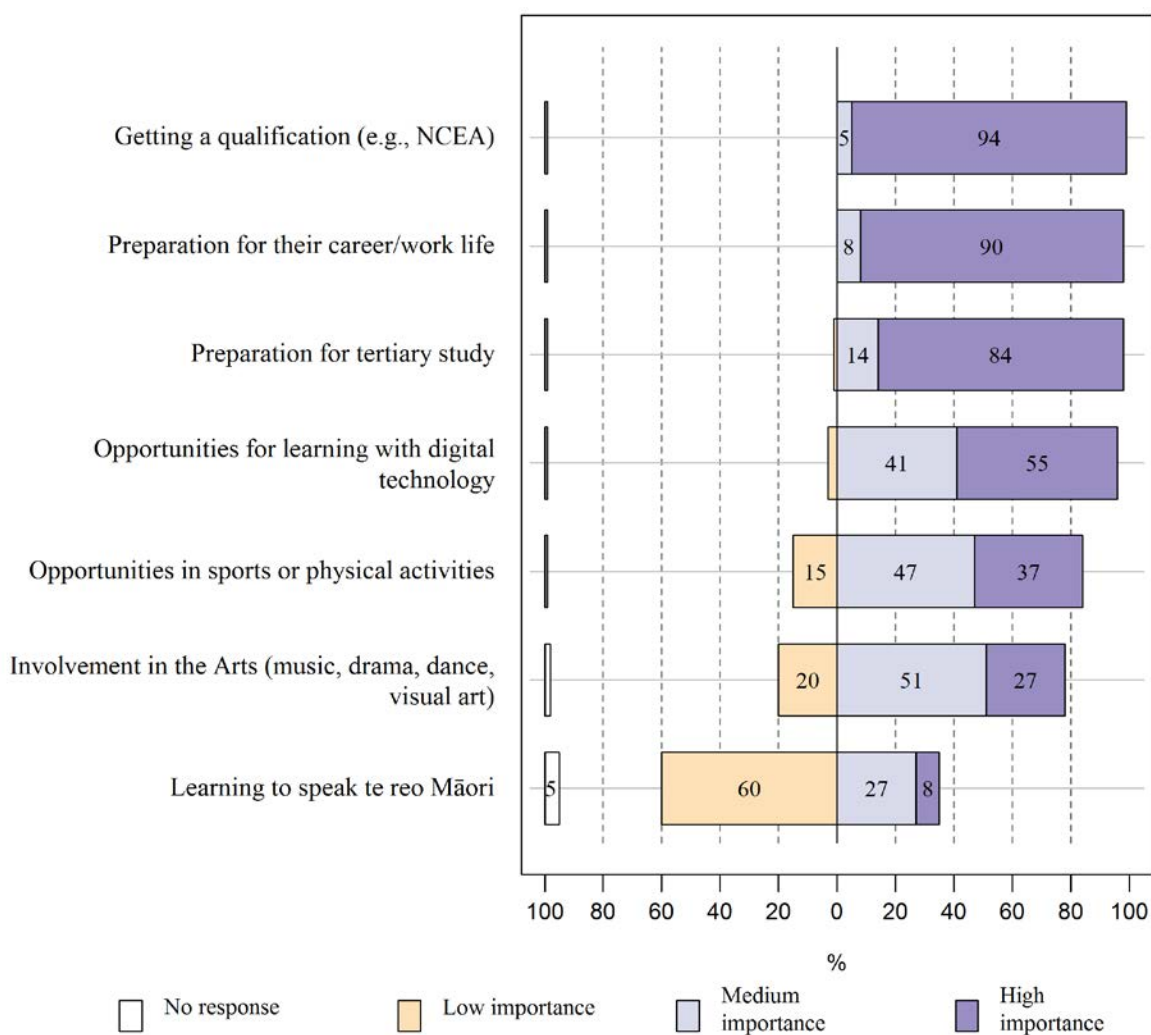
At the end of the survey, parents and whānau were given an opportunity to add a comment about their youngest child’s schooling. Around one-third of parents and whānau ( $n = 405$ ) wrote comments, some of which are included throughout this chapter to further illustrate their perspectives.

Throughout the survey, responses given by parents and whānau varied most often according to the decile and location of the schools their children were attending. In some instances, parents’ ethnicity was also a factor. These differences are reported, where relevant.

### What’s important to parents and whānau?

In 2015 we asked a new question of parents and whānau: the things that were important to them for their child’s education at the secondary school they attended. Of highest importance to parents and whānau was that their child got a qualification and was prepared for their career/work life and tertiary study, followed by opportunities to learn with digital technology, in sport or physical education, and in the arts. Learning to speak te reo Māori was of medium–high importance for 35% of parents and whānau.

FIGURE 42 Parent and whānau views of what’s important for their child’s education at their school ( $n = 1,242$ )





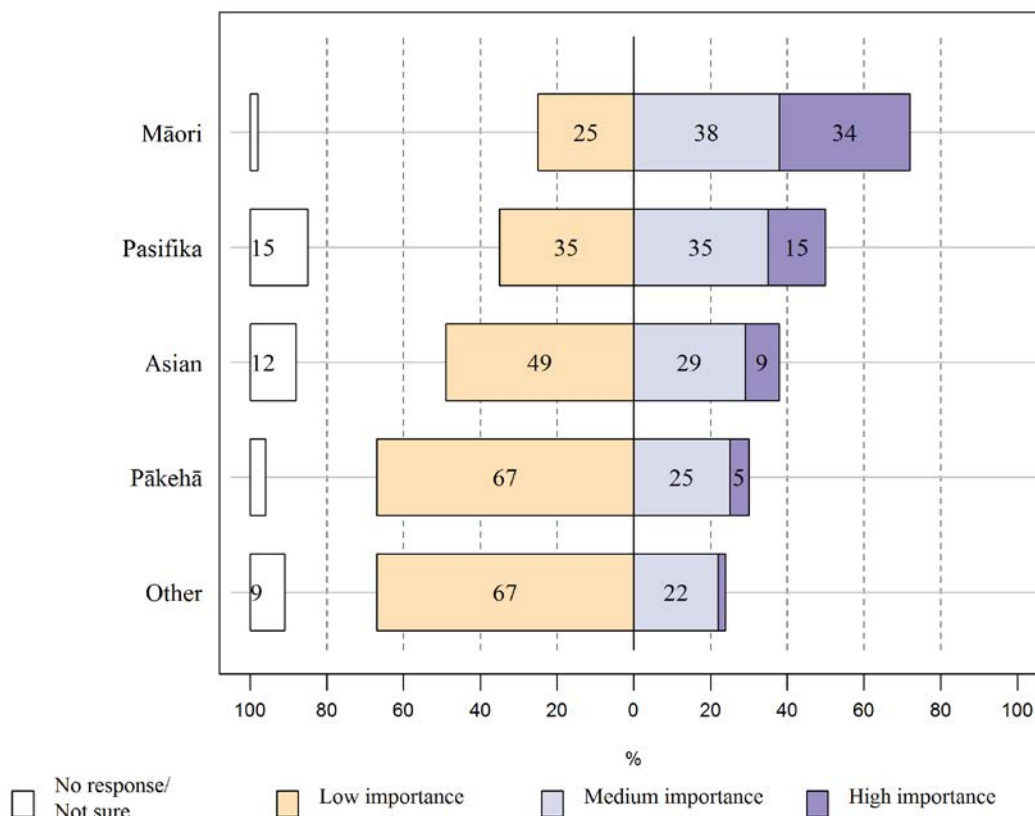
### Te Reo Māori

In NZC there is a clear expectation that every English-medium school will include te reo Māori in its curriculum. The provision of opportunities to learn and use te reo Māori is particularly important for meeting the needs of Māori students, most of whom attend English-medium schools.

Bright (2015)<sup>68</sup> found that the extent to which English-medium schools provide learning opportunities that support Māori students' identity, language and culture varies according to the proportion of Māori students in a school; those with a greater proportion of Māori students have better provision. This was reflected in the survey responses from parents and whānau. Forty-five percent of those who had a child at a school where Māori students were more than 30% of the roll thought learning to speak te reo Māori was of medium or high importance for their child's education (compared with 35% of all parents).

The importance placed on their child learning te reo Māori was also related to the ethnicity with which parents and whānau identified (see Figure 43). For almost three-quarters of Māori parents and whānau, this was of medium or high importance.

FIGURE 43 Parent and whānau views of the importance of their children learning to speak te reo Māori at school, by prioritised ethnicity (n = 1,242)



68 Bright, N., with Wylie, C. (2015). *Ngā whakararanga mo ngā ākonga Māori i roto i ngā kura auraki: He kaupapa nui te tokoiti, tokomaha rānei i ngā ākonga Māori? Providing for Māori students in English-medium schools: Do Māori student numbers matter?* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Elsewhere in the survey, parents and whānau were asked how well they thought their child's secondary school helped their youngest child at the school to learn and speak te reo Māori. Differences associated with parent and whānau ethnicity, school decile and location were evident. Fifty-seven percent of whānau who identified themselves as Māori thought their child's school was doing well or very well with helping their child learn and speak te reo Māori. Almost the same proportion of Pasifika parents gave the same response, with 42% of NZ European/Pākehā parents, 38% of Asian parents and 29% of parents of other ethnicities sharing this view. The 57% of Māori parents who thought their child's school was doing well here is some distance behind the 72% of Māori parents who rated their child learning te reo as of medium to high importance. Parents with children at decile 3–4 schools were more likely to rate their school as doing well or very well with helping them learn te reo Māori (57%, compared with 39–44% for other decile bands), as were those with children at schools in towns (51%, compared with around 40% for schools in small cities and metropolitan schools).

Differences were also evident in the importance Māori parents placed on co-curricular opportunities; 53% of Māori parents indicated their child having opportunities in sports and physical activities was of high importance, compared with 35% of non-Māori parents. Māori whānau were also more likely to rate involvement in the Arts as of high importance (37%, compared with 26%).

Parents' ethnicity made no significant difference to the importance they placed on their children gaining a qualification and preparing for tertiary study and their career/work life, and having opportunities for learning with digital technology.

## School choice

Most parents and whānau (89%) said their youngest child attending secondary school was at their first choice of school, the same as in 2012. Parents of children at decile 7–10 schools were most likely to have their child attending their first choice of school (91%, decreasing to 77% for those with a child at a decile 1–2 school). In 2012 a greater proportion of parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school reported their child being at their first choice of school (82%), with the figure for decile 9–10 similar to 2015 (91%).

Overall, 7% said their child attended a school that was not their first choice, similar to the 9% in 2012 and somewhat lower than the 11% in 2009. Parents and whānau whose child attended a school that was not their first choice were most likely to have a child at a decile 1–2 school (18%, decreasing to 3% for those with a child at a decile 9–10 school). Overlapping somewhat with the association with school decile was parents' ethnicity. Māori whānau were least likely to have their children attend their first choice of school; 16% of Māori parents had not got their first choice of school, compared with 5% of NZ European/Pākehā parents.

The main reasons given for not attending parents' first choice of school were that the child did not want to attend the school their parents desired for them (39% of this group), the school had an enrolment zone that the family lived beyond (36%), cost (32%) and lack of transport (20%). Transport had proven a barrier for some parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school (43%) or a decile 5–6 school (14%), but for no parents with a child at a school in another decile band. Enrolment zones were more likely to prevent Asian parents and those with a child attending a decile 5–10 school from sending their youngest child to their first choice of secondary school.

A higher percentage of parents' first school of choice in 2015 was also their closest school (60%, up from 49% in 2012).<sup>69</sup> This was most likely to be the case for parents whose child attended a school in a town

<sup>69</sup> In 2015, the sample of schools whose parents and whānau participated included a slightly smaller proportion of metropolitan schools (where enrolment zones are more common) than in 2012, so this should be interpreted with caution.

(81%, compared with 68% of those whose child was at a school in a small city, and 50% of those with a child at a metropolitan school). Correspondingly, fewer parents' first school of choice was not their closest school (29%, down from 40% in 2012).

How did parents and whānau access their first choice of school? Fifty-five percent lived within the school zone, up slightly from 49% in 2012. Fourteen percent of the families chose schools without an enrolment zone, with higher proportions of those in towns and with a child at a small school. Nineteen percent met the special character criteria for their school, the same as 2012. This was more likely to apply to parents with children at high-decile schools (37%, decreasing to zero for decile 1–2 schools), medium-large schools (31%, decreasing to 3% for small schools and zero at large schools) and at metropolitan schools (24%). The proportion who went into the ballot for the school (6%) or had been on the priority list for the school (3%) had each dropped somewhat from the 2012 national survey figures (from 14% and 5%, respectively). Students drawn from a ballot or on a priority list were more likely to attend high-decile schools (around 7% of parents with a child at a decile 7–10 school, decreasing to none at decile 1–2 schools). Those drawn from a ballot were also more likely to have a child at a large school (14%, decreasing to none with a child at a small school). Eight percent of parents indicated there were other reasons their children attended the schools they did, such as having older siblings there or because it was the only local school.

We asked parents where they got information to help them choose a secondary school for their youngest child. Two-thirds of families visited the school or attended the school's open day—a marked increase from just over half in 2012. Other information sources included:

- school prospectus (29%)
- school website (23%—an increase from 15% in 2012, and 10% in 2009)
- most recent ERO review of the school (18%—a decrease from 25% in 2012)
- word of mouth from family and friends, and having an immediate family member at the school (each 14%)
- the media (e.g., newspaper, Stuff), school annual report and 'Find a School' website (each 6% or less).

Factors that helped parents and whānau decide on their child's school were more likely to include the child's own preference and having family and friends at the school (currently or in the past) than characteristics of the school itself. Factors that informed parents' school choice included:

- the child wanting to attend that school (54% of parents, and a slightly higher 62% for parents with a child at a large school and 60% for those with children at metropolitan schools)
- an older child or other family members having attended the school (53%—up from 43% in 2012, and 40% in 2009)
- a child's friends going to the school (35%—up slightly from 31% at the last two surveys)
- the school's academic results (35%, and a higher 44% for Asian parents)
- the views of parents and whānau they know (32%—down from 38% in 2012 and 36% in 2009)
- opportunities in sports or physical activities (19%)
- the school's Arts programmes (11%)
- primary/intermediate teachers' views (10%)
- the convenience of the school's location (10%)
- the school's cultural inclusiveness (9%)
- digital technology opportunities (8%, and 16% of parents with a child at a large school)
- the school's te reo Māori and tikanga Māori programme (2%, and a higher 13% for Māori whānau).

Eleven percent of respondents had other reasons that included the special character of the school (3%) and whether it was a co-educational or single-sex school (2%).

School location was related to some different patterns. Parents and whānau with children at metropolitan schools were most likely to visit the school, and get information from the school website or prospectus. When deciding on a school, they were also the most likely to consider every factor reported above, except one: 50% of parents and whānau with children at metropolitan schools were influenced by an older child or other family members who went there, compared with 54% of those linked with schools in small cities and 60% of those with schools in towns.

We compared what parents and whānau said is important to them for their children's education, and what they said helped them decide on the school they chose, where it seemed reasonable to hypothesise links between items (see Table 40). While for almost all parents and whānau, getting a qualification was of high importance for their child's education, a much lower 35% of parents said the school's academic results helped them to decide on the school their child attended. Not all students will take an academic pathway to gaining a qualification, so a school's academic results may not be seen by parents as a good indicator of students getting qualifications at that school. However, for each of the pairs of items in Table 40, the percentages of parents who said these factors helped them choose their child's school were at least half those that rated the same things as of high importance. This is perhaps explained by the greater influence on parents' choice of the child's school preference and their family and friends' attendance at the school, than school characteristics. Alternatively, parents might expect *all* schools to treat these things as important.

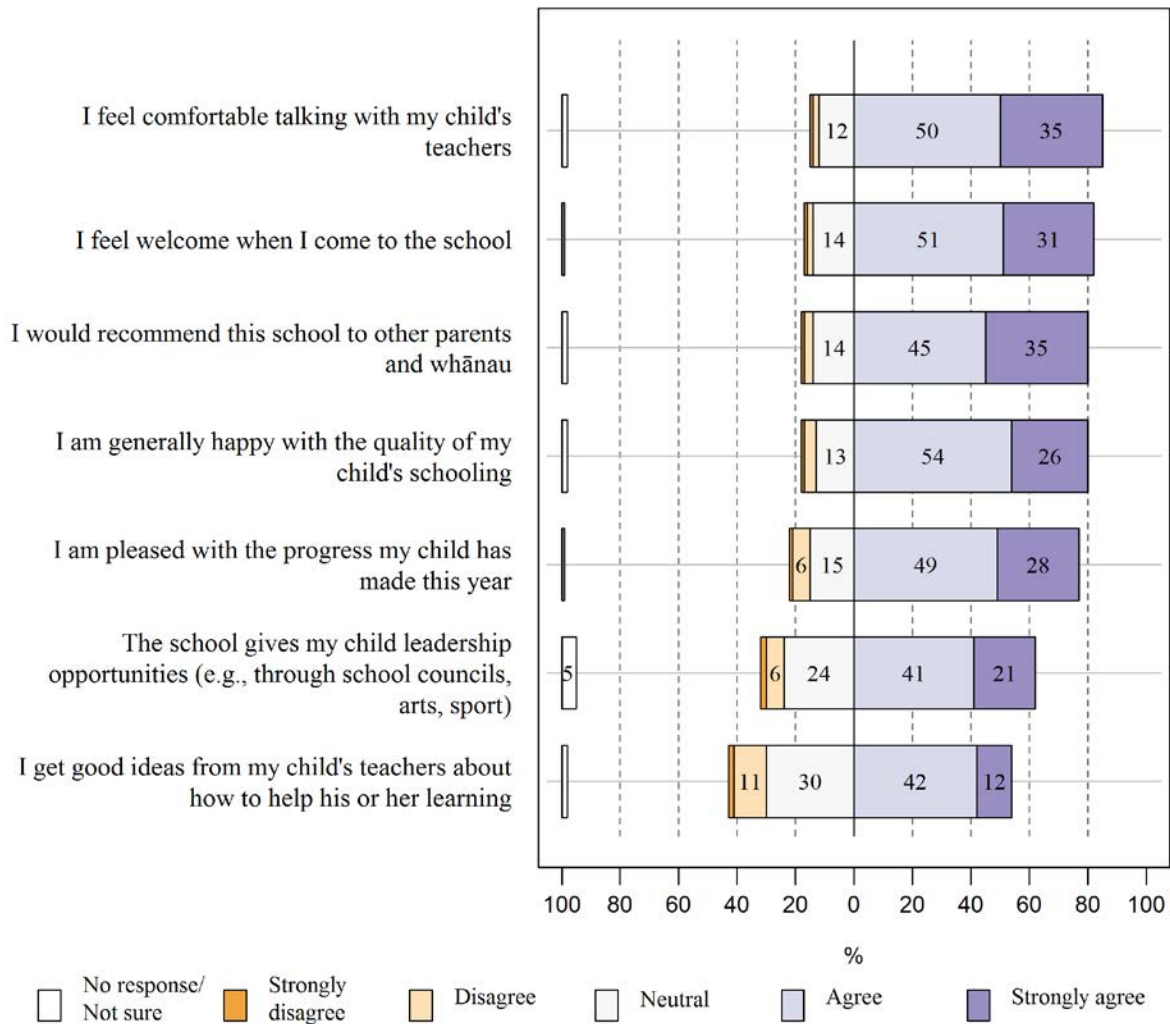
TABLE 40 **Comparison of parent and whānau views about things that are important for their children's education with things that helped them decide on a school (n = 1,242)**

What's important for your child's education at this school?	Rated this as being of high importance %	Helped them decide on this school %	What helped you decide on this school for this child? %
Getting a qualification (e.g., NCEA)	94	35	School's academic results
Opportunities for learning with digital technology	55	8	Digital technology opportunities
Opportunities in sports or physical activities	37	19	Opportunities in sports or physical activities
Involvement in the Arts (music, drama, dance, visual art)	27	11	School's Arts programmes (music, dance, drama, visual arts)
Learning to speak te reo Māori	8	2	School's te reo Māori and tikanga Māori programme

## How is their child's school doing?

Overall, 80% of parents and whānau indicated they were generally happy with the quality of their children's schooling, similar to 2012 and 2009. The responses in Figure 44 also show that most parents were comfortable with visiting the school and talking with their child's teachers, and agreed they would recommend the school to others. Slightly fewer parents agreed their child was being given leadership opportunities, or that they got good ideas from their child's teachers about how to help their child's learning (although the latter was up to 54% from 48% agreeing or strongly agreeing in 2012). Response patterns for other items that were also included in 2012 were much the same in 2015.

FIGURE 44 Parent and whānau feelings about their child's secondary school (n = 1,242)

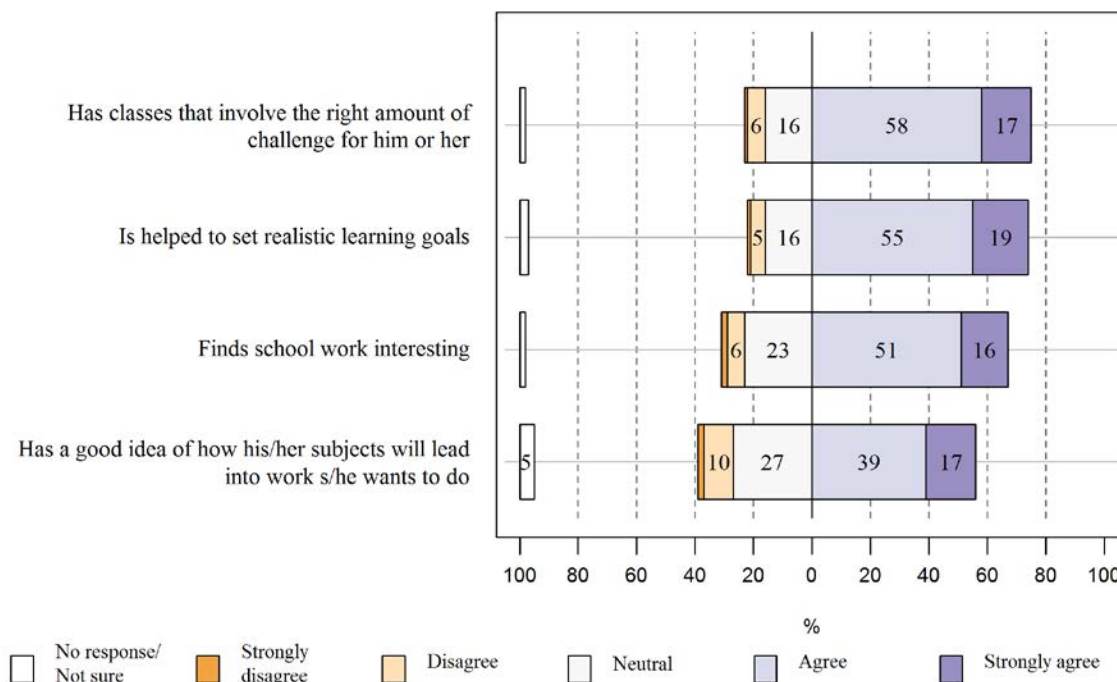


Responses to the items in Figure 44 from parents and whānau with children at a decile 3–4 school tended to be less positive than those of other decile bands. Parents with children at decile 9–10 schools were most likely to agree they would recommend the school to other parents and whānau (83%, decreasing to 62% of parents with children at decile 1–2 schools).

Checking for differences associated with school location, we noticed that parents with children attending schools in towns were generally less sanguine in their responses to this set of questions than those whose children attended schools in small cities or metropolitan schools.

Parents were asked about specific aspects of their child's education and wellbeing at school. Some of these responses are reported in *Chapter 5: Supporting students' wellbeing*. In general, there was evidence of improvement since 2012. For example, there were increases of between 7 and 10% for the three top-rating items in Figure 45, suggesting that in 2015 larger proportions of students were challenged sufficiently to find school work interesting, and were working towards realistic goals. However, just over half the parents thought their child had a good idea of how their subjects would lead into the career they wanted.

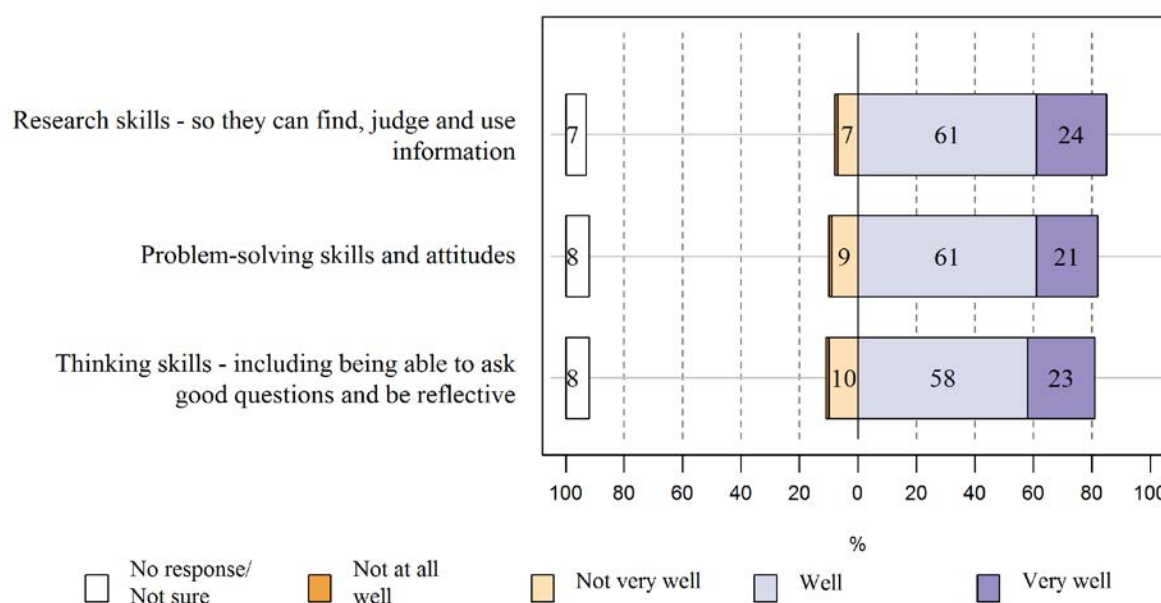
FIGURE 45 Parent and whānau views of their youngest child’s experience at this school (n = 1,242)



Looking at school decile, parents and whānau with children at decile 1–2 schools were most likely to agree their child has a good idea of how their subjects will lead into work they want to do (77%, decreasing to 53% for decile 9–10 schools). This might be a reflection of how we worded this item; it is possible that more parents of children at high-decile schools anticipate their children’s subjects leading into tertiary study than leading (directly) into work. The same pattern was not evident in 2012.

Figure 46 shows that the majority of parents and whānau thought their child’s school did well or very well at helping their child develop research skills, problem-solving skills and attitudes, and thinking skills.

FIGURE 46 How well the school helps develop thinking, problem-solving and research skills; parent and whānau views ( $n = 1,242$ )

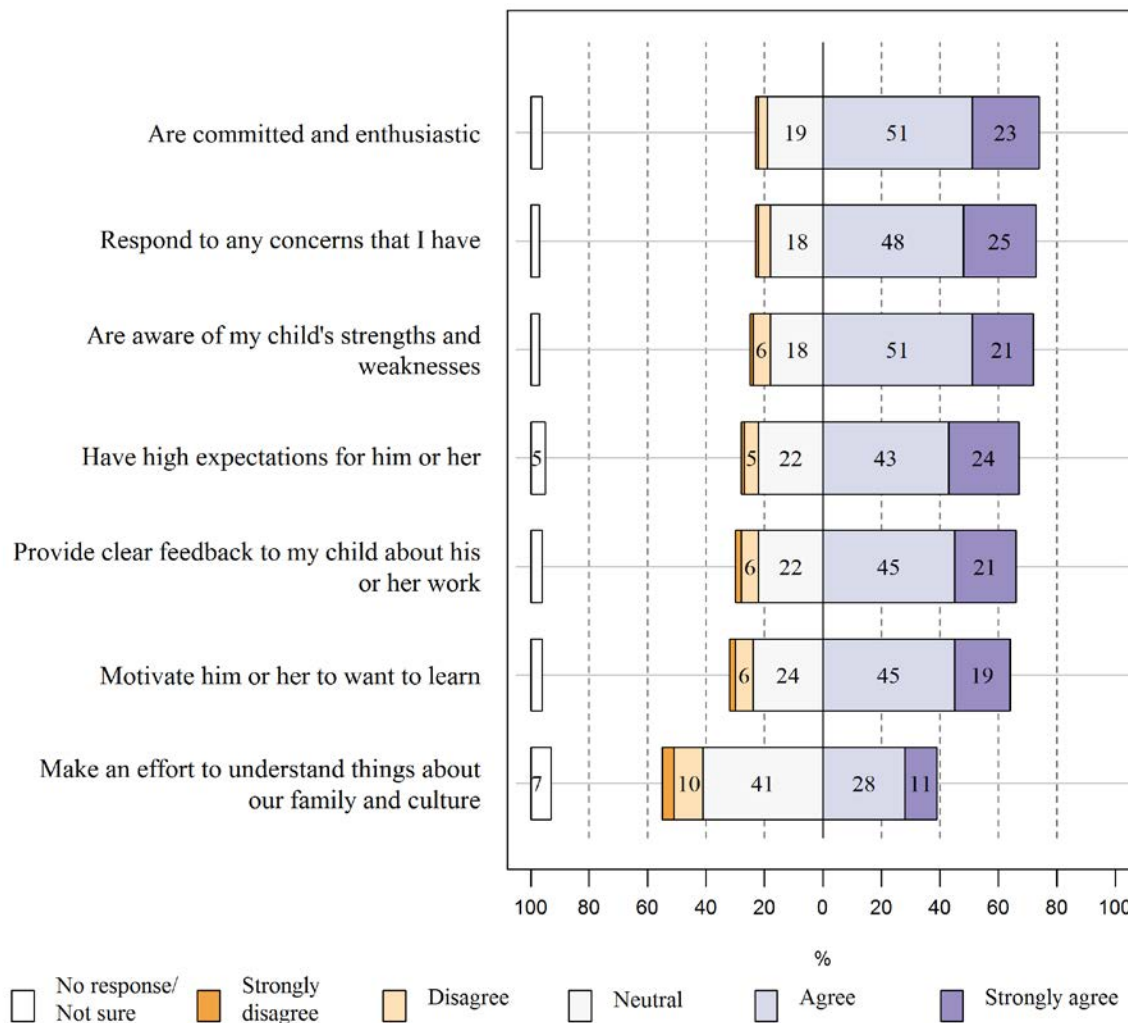


Most parents and whānau were positive about the role their child's teachers played in supporting their learning (see Figure 47), agreeing their teachers were committed and enthusiastic, and responsive to parents' concerns. There were lower levels of agreement that their teachers make an effort to understand things about their family and culture (39%, down slightly from 43% in 2012). Pasifika parents were most likely to agree with this (56%), followed by Asian parents (47%), Māori parents and whānau (42%), NZ European parents (36%) and parents of other ethnicities (also 36%).

Compared with 2012, the biggest difference was in the proportion who agreed their child's teachers motivate them to want to learn, which was 64% in 2015 (compared with 72% in 2012, but similar to 65% in 2009). There were two other small differences. The proportion agreeing their child's teachers respond to any concerns they have was higher (73%, compared with 68% in 2012 and 63% in 2009). Slightly fewer parents agreed their child's teachers make an effort to understand things about their family and culture (38%, compared with 43% in 2012 and 33% in 2009).



FIGURE 47 Parent and whānau views of their youngest child's teachers at this school (n = 1,242)



As a group, Pasifika parents tended to give the most positive responses to the items in Figure 47, but this should be interpreted with caution, as the number of respondents in this group was relatively small (n = 48). Asian parents were the most likely to agree their child has a good idea of how their subjects will lead into work they want to do (71%, compared with 52% of NZ European/Pākehā parents). NZ European/Pākehā parents were the most likely to think their child's teachers are aware of their child's strengths and weaknesses (74% agreed they were, compared with around 68% of non-NZ European/Pākehā parents).

There were consistently fewer positive responses to this set of items from parents with children at decile 3–4 schools. For example, 58% of those with a child attending these schools agreed their teachers have high expectations for them, compared with 70% for decile 9–10 schools.

The comments parents and whānau wrote at the end of their surveys contribute to an overall picture of what they thought about their child's schooling. Positive comments about the school or their child's experience there were the most frequently made (13% of all parents). Five percent also wrote positive comments about their children's teachers or school principal:

I have found [this] to be an excellent school. It is extremely well run and I would recommend it to any parent. I cannot speak highly enough about the staff and am very grateful both of my children were educated at such an outstanding educational institution.

We have always been happy with how this school operates and how it delivers its curriculum. Its standards are high, and there is excellent communication from teachers when it is warranted.

This school provides a generally safe learning environment which encourages excellence in the individual ability of the child, be it academic or practically based skills. The principal's leadership is strong and his inclusive approach has created a school community with values and respect. We have had 2 children through this school and in general we are pleased with the care, results and learning teachers have provided.

There were smaller proportions of critical comments about staff members (4%) and about the school or their child's experience there (1%):

This last year for my youngest has been diabolical. He has not been motivated to do work, had an English teacher that kept picking on him (that didn't get sorted until the end of the second term). Constant meetings with school, then school not following through with him to keep motivation up. He will be lucky to even get NCEA Level 2. I understand the child needs to do the work but the teachers have just given up on him! Not like teachers used to be who were passionate to help their students.

The school my daughter attends is a very unwelcoming school. I had 2 boys at 2 different boys' high schools and I always felt welcome there but not at this school. And I'm not sure why, but it just doesn't have a good feeling about it. I also attended this school years ago and I loved it there.

Issues around school culture were also identified in the comments made by a small proportion (2%) of parents and whānau:

Really disappointed with the way some staff talk to the kids—little respect—unless the kid is perceived well by the tutor. One of my children is quiet and often his peers take advantage of him, this happens to others and staff don't address it.

Every year the children of parents who teach at this college get the prizes. Unfair. College A [sports team] and Rugby 1st 15 get priority over every other sport in the school i.e., school vans, changing other games to accommodate these two sports.

Currently there seems to be a lot of bullying, smoking and even drug use.

### Costs and participation

The 2015 survey included a new question about whether cost had prevented their child's participation in school activities. Twenty percent of the parents and whānau who responded to the survey reported that cost had prevented their child from participating in one or more of these activities:

- overseas trip for a particular subject/class (13%)
- sport (5%)
- camp (5%)
- selecting a subject/class (e.g., technology) that they wanted to do (4%)
- field trip (2%)
- cultural activity (2%).

A higher percentage of parents and whānau with children at decile 1–2 schools reported cost had been a barrier for their child selecting a subject or class that they wanted to do (8%, decreasing to 2% for decile 9–10 schools). For 21% of those with children at decile 1–2 schools, cost had meant their child had been unable to go on an overseas trip for a particular subject. For decile 3–6, the proportion was 10%, and for

decile 7–10, 14%. Parents with a child at a large school were more likely to report their child had been unable to go on an overseas trip for a particular class (16%, decreasing to zero for those with a child at a small school).

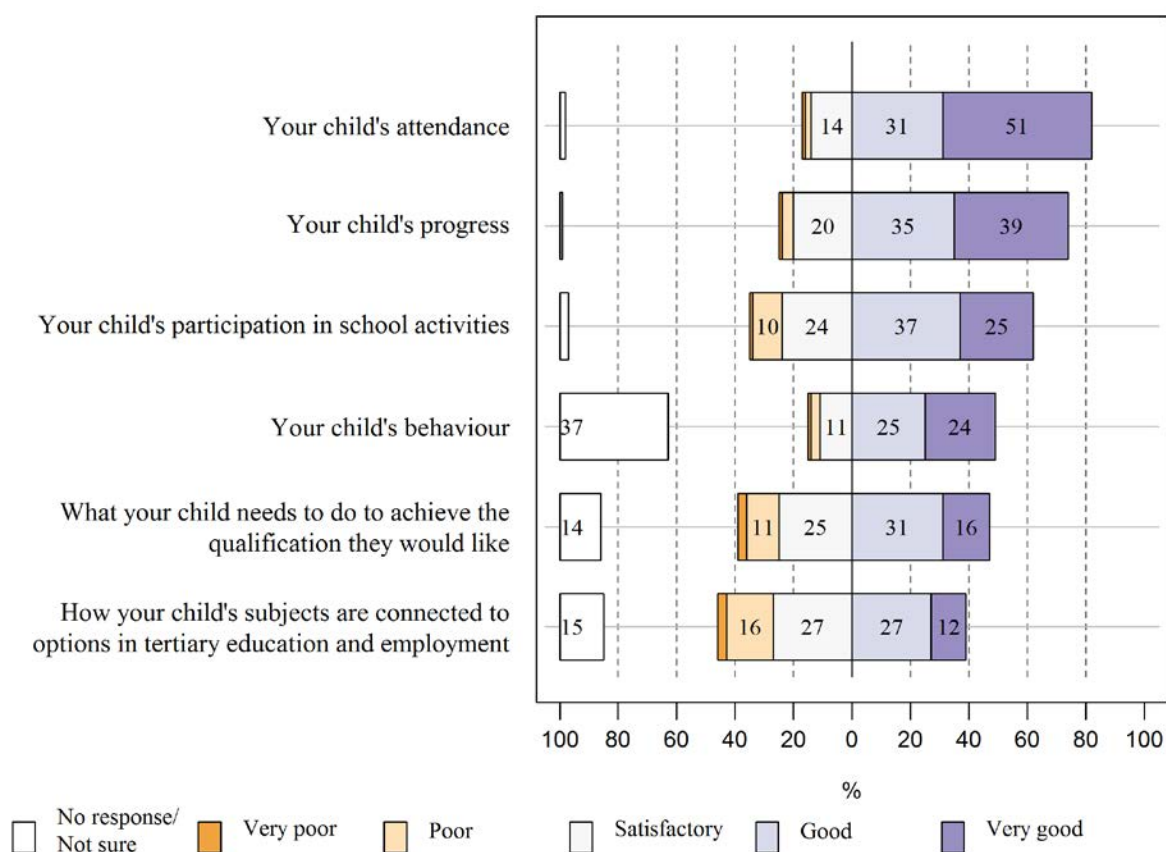
## School information for parents and whānau

In this section we look at the nature of information parents and whānau receive from the school, whether the information is on paper or electronic and how often they refer to it. We also explore where parents source information about their school and education in general.

### Information about their child

Most parents indicated that the information they received about their child’s attendance and progress was good or very good (see Figure 48). Information about their child’s behaviour, what they needed to do to achieve the qualification they would like and the connections between what their child’s current subjects and options in tertiary study and employment were not so well rated, with relatively high proportions of parents either indicating they were unsure about these or not responding.

FIGURE 48 Quality of information from the school about their child; parent and whānau views (n = 1,242)



There has been a steady increase in the proportion of parents who rated as good or very good the information they got from the school about their child's progress (74%, compared with 63% in 2012 and 53% in 2009). A small increase was evident also in the proportion of parents who said the school gave them good or very good information on what their child needs to do to achieve the qualification they would like (47%, compared with 41% in 2012). This was the only information for which a school decile-related difference was shown: 64% of parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school rated as good or very good the information they received about what their child needs to do to achieve the qualification they would like (decreasing to 41% for those with a child at a decile 9–10 school).

School location was associated with some differences. Parents and whānau whose child attended a secondary school in a small city were the most likely to rate as good or very good the quality of information they receive about their child's progress (84%, compared with 76% of those with a child at a metropolitan school, and 67% of those with a child at a town school). A similar pattern was apparent for attendance information: 86% of parents with a child at a school in a small city rated this as good or very good, as did 83% of those with a child at a metropolitan school, and 77% of those with a child at a town school.

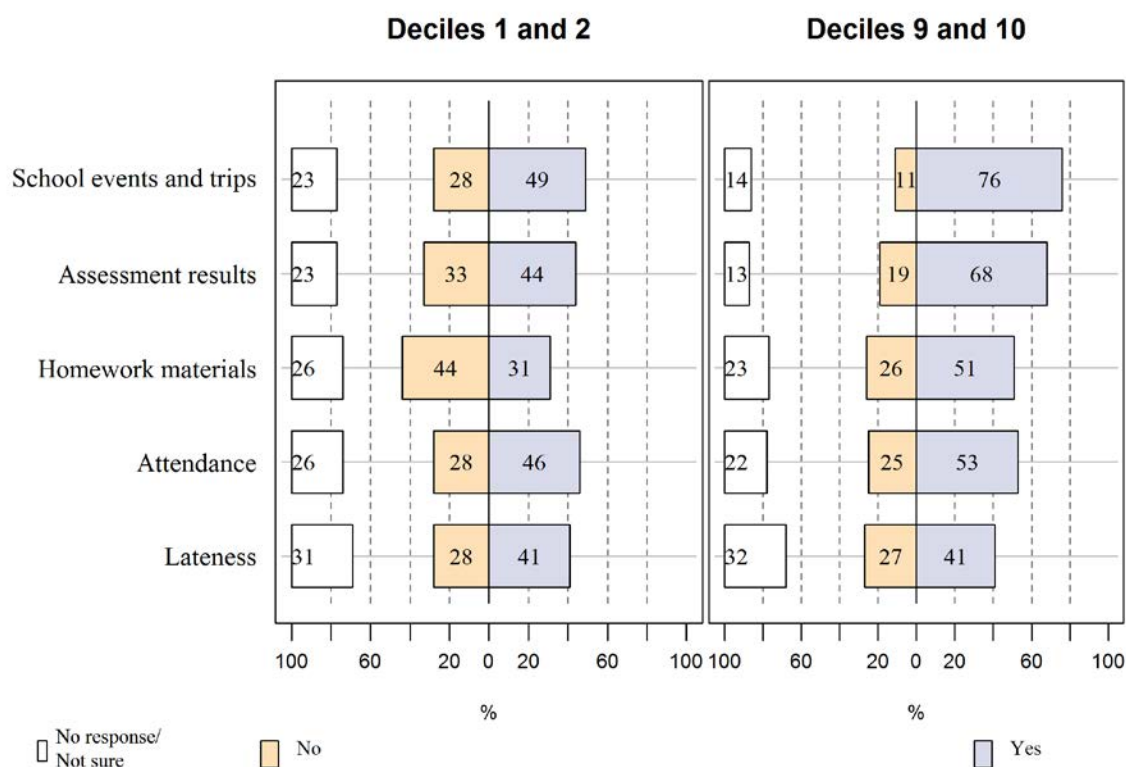
Just under two-thirds of the parents and whānau had electronic access to information about school events and trips, and assessment results, as shown in Table 41. A significant minority did not know if they had electronic access to the information we asked about.

TABLE 41 **Parent and whānau electronic access to school information (n = 1,242)**

Information on:	Yes %	No %	Not sure %
School events and trips	64	17	18
Assessment results	63	19	17
Attendance	57	22	20
Lateness	47	25	26
Homework materials	44	28	26

As Figure 49 shows, those most likely to have electronic access to this information had children at decile 9–10 schools, other than for lateness. Parents' electronic access generally increased with school decile, with the responses shown here representing either end of a continuum. Although parents with a child at a decile 1–2 or a decile 9–10 school reported similar electronic access to lateness information, the proportions were higher for the intervening decile bands: the figure for decile 3–4 was 51%, decile 5–6 was 46% and decile 7–8 was also 51%. There was no significant difference associated with school decile for electronic access to a child's attendance information.

FIGURE 49 Parent and whānau electronic access to information from school; deciles 1-2 and 9-10



Looking at school location, parents and whānau with children at schools in towns had the lowest rates of electronic access to student-related information, and those with children at schools in small cities reported the highest rate. For example, assessment and attendance information could be accessed electronically by 52% and 42% (respectively) of parents and whānau connected with schools in towns, compared with 79% and 75% of those with children at schools in small cities. It is not surprising then, that those whose children were at schools in small cities also electronically accessed their child’s information more often.

The proportion of parents and whānau with electronic access to school information about their child increased with school size. Seven percent of parents with a child at a small school<sup>70</sup> said they have electronic access to their child’s attendance information, increasing to 74% of those with a child at a large school. Likewise, 21% of those with a child at a small school had electronic access to their child’s assessment results, increasing to 71% for large schools.

Perhaps because they were of more immediate concern than other information types, information regarding homework materials, and school events and trips had the highest rates of weekly access and were accessed at least once a term by 66% and 70% of the parents and whānau who had electronic access (see Table 42). But the information that saw the greatest percentage of parents accessing it at least once a term was assessment information (73%). This is consistent with what parents and whānau said about the importance for their child of gaining qualifications. Attendance and lateness were the information types most likely to be accessed less often than once per term by parents.

70 The number of parents with a child at a small school was 29, so we report their response rates only where there is a clear trend across all school sizes.

TABLE 42 Frequency of accessing electronic information about their child, by parents and whānau who had access

Information on:	At least weekly	Three to nine times per term	Once or twice per term	Less than once per term
	%	%	%	%
Homework materials	21	18	27	31
School events and trips	17	24	29	26
Attendance	13	15	29	41
Lateness	13	14	24	44
Assessment results	8	22	43	25

There were some school decile-related differences in the types of information that parents who had electronic access accessed most frequently.<sup>71</sup> Forty-five percent of parents with a child at a decile 9–10 school reported accessing homework materials at least three times per term, and 44% accessed information about school events and trips with similar frequency. Parents with a child at a decile 7–8 school were the group that were most likely to access assessment information at least three times a term (33% did so).

Parents who had electronic access to their child’s attendance information were more than twice as likely as those who did not to report the information was very good (62% and 48%, respectively).

Those who did not have electronic access to information about their child from the school ranged from 17% (information about school events and trips) to 28% (homework materials). Similar proportions indicated they did not know whether they had electronic access to the various types of information discussed here.

Another source of information about their child was discussions with staff members. Parents received their surveys part-way through Term 3, so would have had opportunities during that school year to meet with teachers and other staff members to talk about their child’s progress. Many parents and whānau had had a discussion with their child’s subject teachers (67%) or form teacher/tutor teacher/academic mentor (61%)—similar to 2012. In both cases, more than two-thirds of these discussions included their child—slightly more than previously. There was a decrease in the percentage of parents who reported they had had a discussion with a dean (26%, down from 36% in 2012). Twelve percent of parents had had a discussion with the principal or deputy principal (around 24% for parents with a child at a small or small-medium school, decreasing to 7% for those whose child was at a large school), 8% with a careers adviser and 7% with a guidance counsellor. Overall, parents continued to discuss their child’s progress most often with their teachers, and slightly more of these conversations were including the child.

Parents and whānau whose child was at a decile 1–2 school were more likely to have discussed their child’s progress with their form teacher (82%, decreasing to 60% for decile 9–10 schools) and with the principal or deputy principal (21%, decreasing to 9%). Those whose children attended high-decile schools are more likely to have talked to their children’s subject teacher(s) (74% for decile 9–10 schools, decreasing to 49% for decile 3–4 schools and 59% for decile 1–2 schools).

School location was also related to the discussions parents and whānau had with school staff about their children’s progress. Those whose children went to schools in small cities were the most likely to have discussed their children’s progress with subject teachers (81%, including 62% who involved their children

<sup>71</sup> For some of these items, there were fewer than 20 parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school who had electronic access, so here we report trends that were evident across the decile bands.

in these discussions). Parents and whānau with children at schools in towns were twice as likely as those whose children went to metropolitan schools to have had a discussion about their child’s progress with the principal or their deputy (19%, compared with 9%).

The comments 4% of parents wrote at the end of their survey reflected a view that some schools needed to improve the ways in which parent–teacher discussions were run, and improve their interactions with parents and whānau:

The Parent/Teacher meetings are a shambles. Teachers don’t stick to the 5 min time slots; parents arrive late & expect to push in & this year I had an appointment with a teacher who didn’t turn up.

With the exception of a couple, I have personally found teachers at [the school] unapproachable, in fact I’m yet to meet one of my child’s actual classroom teachers as parent/teacher interviews are held solely with your child’s academic mentor who in many cases doesn’t even teach your child.

Parent communication is abysmal and I do not feel there is any interest in either keeping parents informed or dealing with issues professionally or appropriately. At times inquiries are totally and completely ignored. At other times direct inquiry by a parent is not replied to the parent and the child is dragged into it. There is little or no respect in some instances for the parent’s wishes, or even acknowledgement that the parent is the most influential person in a child’s life and therefore communication is paramount.

### Information about the school

To get up-to-date information about the school, parents and whānau were using the sources shown in Table 43. Compared with 2012, more parents were getting information about the school via emailed newsletters, rather than paper newsletters. However, fewer parents were looking at their school’s latest ERO report or annual report. The number using these as a source of information about their child’s school is very low, particularly in view of the expectation in the consultation on the Update of the Educational Act that these are prime information sources for parents and would give them more agency in their child’s education.

TABLE 43 Sources of information about their child’s school, reported by parents and whānau (n = 1,242)

Information sources	2012 (n = 1,477) %	2015 (n = 1,242) %
Newsletters emailed to me	66	76
School website	64	59
Newsletters on paper	43	30
Other parents and whānau	28	22
Local community newspaper	19	13
Latest ERO report	16	9
Annual report	13	7
“Find a School” website	*	5
Digital media	*	4
Class blog	2	3
Other	6	3

\*Not asked



Emailed newsletters were almost universal for parents at decile 9–10 schools (89%, compared with 18% for parents at decile 1–2 schools). The greater digital access of parents at decile 9–10 schools was also evident with 73% of these schools' parents and whānau getting information from the school website, decreasing to 26% of parents at decile 1–2 schools. Conversely, just 10% of decile 9–10 school parents got school information from paper newsletters, compared with 80% of parents with children at decile 1–2 schools.

School location was also related to different patterns for paper and email newsletters. Parents and whānau whose children attended schools in small cities were the most likely to receive school newsletters by email (92%, compared with 80% for those whose children attended metropolitan schools, and 59% of parents whose children attended schools in towns). Parents with children at schools in towns were the most likely to receive paper newsletters (52%).

Parents with children attending schools in towns were more likely to get information about the school from local community newspapers (23%, compared with 8% for those with children at metropolitan schools). They were less likely to use the school website for up-to-date information (40%, compared with 72% of those with children at schools in small cities, and 65% of those with children at metropolitan schools).

Also associated with newsletter mode was school size. Parents and whānau with a child at a small–medium school were both the most likely group to receive paper newsletters (66% did so) and the least likely to receive newsletters via email (46%). Those with a child at a small school were also more likely to get information about their school from other parents and whānau (31%, decreasing to 14% for those with a child at a large school).

Also related to information about their child's school, in *Chapter 8: Trustee perspectives and the work of school boards*, we report an increase in the proportion of parents and whānau who felt genuinely consulted by their school about new directions or issues (47%, up from 41% in 2012, and 34% of parents in 2009).

### **Information about education**

The median number of information sources parents indicated they used to get information about education, other than through the school, decreased from four in 2009 and 2012 to three in 2015. Friends, newspapers and other parents and whānau, followed by Internet searches and family were the main sources of information about education in general (see Table 44), at somewhat lower proportions. Figures for use of the Ministry of Education have remained steady at 22% since 2009. There has been a decrease in the use of ERO as a general source. The use of traditionally paper-based information sources—newspapers, books and magazines—has showed clear downward trends since 2009.

TABLE 44 Main sources of information about education, reported by parents and whānau; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Main information sources	2009 (n = 1,877) %	2012 (n = 1,477) %	2015 (n = 1,242) %
Friends	55	52	50
Newspapers	61	53	48
Other parents and whānau	57	56	46
Internet searches	44	52	43
Family	48	43	42
TV	40	37	37
Ministry of Education	22	22	22
Radio	21	20	19
Education Review Office	25	28	18
Books	28	22	13
Magazines	21	16	11
Other	6	7	8
NZ School Trustees Assn.	*	*	4

\*Not asked

Declines in the number of sources used did not appear to be counterbalanced by an increase in getting information from alternative sources.

The small proportion of responses in the “Other” category did not shed any light on this. Half of these responses (4%) indicated parents and whānau had first-hand experience in education (e.g., were themselves teachers, or school trustees). Less than 1% of responses related to parents’ use of digital media such as Twitter and Facebook as one of their main sources of information.

Fewer parents with a connection to a decile 1–2 school used Internet searches as a main source of information (33%, increasing to 50% for decile 9–10). This echoes the decile-related difference in how parents and whānau get up-to-date information about their child’s school, described earlier.

Likewise, parents and whānau with children attending schools in towns were less likely to use Internet searches as a main source of information (33%, compared with 48% for metropolitan schools). Again, this is consistent with the school location patterns for getting information about the school.

School size was related to parents’ use of some information sources. Twenty-four percent of parents with a child at a small school used Internet searches to find out about education in general, increasing to 50% of those whose child attended a large school. Parents of children at small schools were more likely to indicate other parents and whānau were a main source of information (66%, decreasing to 40% of those with children at large schools).

## Parent and whānau involvement with their child's school

In Table 45 we compare parents' involvement with their child's school over the three most recent surveys of secondary schools. Since 2009, we can see increases in most of the aspects we asked about.

TABLE 45 Parent and whānau involvement with their child's secondary school; 2009, 2012 and 2015

Involvement	2009 (n = 1,877) %	2012 (n = 1,477) %	2015 (n = 1,242) %
Sports, attending	27	34	50
Responded to school survey(s)	23	37	43
Fundraising	19	28	32
School plays/choir/orchestra, etc., attending <sup>◇</sup>	13	21	26
School trips	14	13	20
Sports, coaching/helping	8	17	17
Consultation	7	9	10
PTA/school Council/BoT	5	4	6
Other	3	6	6
Kapa haka, attending*	*	*	5
School plays/choir/orchestra, etc., coaching/helping	3	6	4
Classroom help	1	1	2
Building repairs and maintenance	1	1	1
Kapa haka, coaching/helping*	*	*	1
Library, helping	1	<1	1
Supervision around grounds during school hours/duty	<1	<1	1
Canteen/school lunches	1	2	1

\* In 2009 and 2012, kapa haka was included with "School plays/choir/orchestra/kapa haka etc.," for both "attending" and "coaching/helping" items. In 2015, we asked about kapa haka separately.

\* Not asked.

◇ In 2009 and 2012 this item also included kapa haka.

School decile was associated with differences in parent and whānau involvement at school; with those with a child at a decile 1–2 school more likely to have contributed practical help to support the school's activities. In decile 1–2 schools more parents and whānau:

- attended kapa haka (15%, compared with 2% of parents and whānau at decile 9–10 schools)
- helped in the classroom (15%, compared with less than 1%)
- helped in the library (8%, compared with less than 1%)
- coached/helped with kapa haka (5%, compared with less than 1%).

Those with a child at a decile 9–10 school were more likely to have supported the school by contributing their ideas in surveys, fundraising and attending events involving students (with the exception of kapa haka). In decile 9–10 schools, more parents and whānau:

- responded to school surveys (48%, compared with 21% of parents and whānau at decile 1–2 schools)
- took part in fundraising (46%, compared with 28%)
- attended sports (59%, compared with 23%)
- attended school plays/choir/orchestra (35%, compared with 13%).

Looking at differences associated with parents' ethnicities, 21% of Māori whānau attended kapa haka, and 6% coached or helped with kapa haka. Attending sport was most likely among Māori and NZ European/Pākehā parents (around 53% each, compared with 22% of Asian parents). NZ European/Pākehā parents were more likely than those of other ethnicities to take part in fundraising (36%). Pasifika parents had the highest rate of helping in the classroom (15%).

School location was associated with several differences in parent involvement in fundraising, responding to school surveys and attending sports. Parents and whānau whose children were at metropolitan schools were least likely to have taken part in the first two activities, and those whose children attended schools in small cities were the least likely to have attended sports events.

School size was also related to differences here. Those with a child at a small school were the most likely to report involvement in fundraising, and attending or coaching/helping with sports.

## Summary and discussion

Parents and whānau were generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling, and with the role their child's teachers play in supporting the child's learning. For most parents and whānau their child attended their first choice of secondary school and for 60%, this was their nearest school. When parents and whānau chose a school for their youngest child, they were more likely to take into account the child's preference, the school's links with family members and whether their child's friends were also going to that school, than to weigh up information about the school's academic track record or the programmes they offered. For this reason, some of the things they said were of high importance for their child's education did not appear to be given a high level of consideration when choosing their youngest child's school. For example, while factors such as opportunities for learning with digital technology were highly important, a child wanting to go to a school was more compelling for parents and whānau. Similarly, although nearly all parents thought their child gaining a qualification was of high importance, a much smaller proportion indicated they considered the school's academic results when deciding on the child's school.

Many things were important to all parents and whānau for their children's education: getting a qualification, preparing for further study and a career and having opportunities for learning with digital technology. For Māori whānau more than non-Māori, it was important that their child learn te reo Māori at school. A smaller proportion of Māori parents thought their child's school was doing well at helping their child learn te reo Māori.

In the context of a greater focus in schools on tracking students' learning and assessment information, more parents thought they were getting good information from the school about their child's progress (74%, compared with 63% in 2012 and 53% in 2009). As we saw in *Chapter 3: Working with NCEA*, more parents indicated they understand how NCEA works, so are likely to find information about their child's progress of greater relevance.

Parents were using fewer sources than in 2012 to get education-related information. Friends and other parents, as well as newspapers, tended to be their preferred information sources in 2015. There was a decrease in parents' use of ERO as a source of information about their school and about education in general.

Electronic access to information increased with school decile, resulting in unequal use of this information source. School location also made a difference, with parents and whānau with a child at a town school more likely to have met with their child's form teacher, and more likely to get information about the school from a local newspaper.

# 10.

## School resources and viability

**In this chapter we look at key aspects of school viability in terms of funding, staffing and competition for student numbers. Stability in student numbers allows the stability in funding and staffing that also supports stable development of teaching and learning. Growth in student numbers can also support ongoing development of schools' core work, provided it occurs at a manageable pace.**

### Funding

Funding has long topped the major issues principals identify facing their school. But in 2015, teachers' NCEA workloads and the dominance of assessment in secondary curriculum topped that list. Funding was identified as a major issue for their school by 51% of principals, down from 78% in 2012, and from 86% in 2009. A similar trend was evident in trustees' views of the issues facing their school.<sup>72</sup>

Nonetheless, in 2015 only 14% of secondary principals believed their school's government funding was enough to meet its needs. This is an increase from the 5% who believed so in 2012, and the 3% who believed so in 2009, but it is still low.

Reducing school spending was how 46% of the principals were managing their school budget in 2015. This includes 20% of those who said their school's government funding was enough. These reductions had had negative effects on schools':

- provision of co-curricular experiences (65% of those who had cut school spending)
- quality of curriculum resourcing (59%)
- practical components of courses (40%)
- curriculum options offered in Years 11 to 13 (29%)
- curriculum options offered in Years 9 and 10 (16%).

<sup>72</sup> Chapter 11: *Support and challenge* gives the full picture of the issues people see facing their school.

Turning to other sources of funding was also important. International student numbers have increased in recent years, and 53% of the principals said their school relied on attracting them so that it could provide a good breadth of courses. Parent provision of digital devices underpinned the use of digital technology for learning in 58% of the secondary schools. Most of the schools had some students left out of co-curricular experiences when parents were asked to pay the cost of these experiences.

Stability in school finances allows stable school development. There was a strong increase since 2012 in the proportion of principals who reported that their school finances in 2015 were looking much the same as in 2014 (48% in 2015, compared with 22% in 2012 and 21% in 2009). Thirty-five percent reported that their financial situation looked worse than in 2014, and 17% reported that it looked better. Half of those who said it looked better had also reduced their spending for 2015, as had 61% of those who said their financial situation looked worse. Those whose school finances were stable were less likely to have reduced spending in 2015 (33% of this group had done so).

Reducing their spending or taking more international fee-paying students were the two main ways in which the 17% of schools whose finances were looking better in 2015 than in 2014 had improved their situation. A few had also had a roll increase, increased their fees or donation payment levels or raised more money locally.

A rise in fixed costs was the main factor behind having a worse financial situation in 2015 than in 2014 for 69% of secondary schools in this position. Other factors included roll decrease, drops in fee or donation payment levels and locally raised funds and fewer international fee-paying students.

### Links with socioeconomic decile

Schools' financial situations were linked to their funding decile, indicating the proportion of students from low socioeconomic homes served. Decile 9–10 schools serving the fewest numbers of such students had the most stable financial situation (69% said it was the same in 2015 as the year before). Only 17% of decile 9–10 school principals reported that their financial situation was worse in 2015 than the year before, and 27% of decile 7–8 school principals.

Most decile 9–10 secondary schools have international students.<sup>73</sup> Not surprisingly, 81% of the principals of these schools agreed or strongly agreed (50%) that they relied on income from this source to provide a good breadth of courses. Decile 1–2 schools attract fewer such students, and only 5% of their principals agreed that they relied on this source.<sup>74</sup>

Decile 9–10 secondary schools can ask more of their parents. Forty-seven percent of their principals strongly agreed that the school's use of digital technology for learning depended on parents providing devices, compared with 10% of decile 1–2 school principals.<sup>75</sup> Only 19% of decile 9–10 school principals strongly agreed that they had some students who missed out on co-curricular activities when parents were asked to pay costs, compared with 44% of decile 7–8 school principals, 50% of decile 5–6 school principals and 60% of decile 1–4 school principals.

Reductions in spending were reported most for decile 1–2 schools (65% of these principals), and least for decile 7–8 (27%) and decile 9–10 schools (33%). However, if schools made reductions, the effects were similar across deciles: where schools were cutting, they cut in similar ways.

73 2013 figures also show that decile 7–10 Years 9–15 schools enrolled 74% of all the international students in these schools. International Division, Ministry of Education. (2014). *New Zealand schools—trends in international enrolments*. Available at: [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/149344/International-enrolments-in-NZ-schools,-July-2014.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/149344/International-enrolments-in-NZ-schools,-July-2014.pdf)

74 Compared with 45% of decile 3–4 school principals, 55% of decile 5–6 school principals and 62% of decile 7–8 school principals.

75 Twenty-nine percent of decile 7–8 school principals also strongly agreed that they depended on parents for digital device provision, as did 12% of decile 5–6 school principals, and 17% of decile 3–4 school principals.

Differences in school size or location were not related to differences in schools' financial situations in 2015. (There was some overlap with school socioeconomic decile, with decile 1–2 schools being smaller on average, and mostly located in urban areas.)

## Staffing

A minority of secondary principals believed their school's teaching staffing entitlement was enough to meet the school's needs, 24%, much the same as in 2012, but somewhat more than the 18% who believed so in 2009.

Most (76%) employed more teaching staff than their entitlement. In many cases these additional staff taught a curriculum area (72% of these schools). Other roles undertaken with these additional staff were working with international students (36% of these schools), with students whose English was a second language (36%), with students with additional needs or needing learning assistance (33%), providing literacy or numeracy support (27%), pastoral care (27%), Gateway or careers work (17%), music or other arts tuition (17%), te reo Māori support (13%) and data management (5%).

Many principals (71%) had difficulty finding suitable teachers to fill vacancies. Thirty percent had general difficulty, 52% in particular curriculum areas (with some overlaps in those who had both general difficulty and even more so for particular curriculum areas).

There was particular difficulty finding te reo Māori teachers: 24% had difficulty finding those who could teach the language at a high level, 17% who could teach it at a moderate level and 12% who could teach it at a basic level. In total, 31% of secondary schools had difficulty finding te reo Māori teachers (9% at all three language levels, 3% at two of these levels and 19% at one of these levels). Difficulty finding te reo Māori teachers went across the board: it was unrelated to the proportion of Māori students in the school, or other school characteristics.

Middle management positions were also difficult to fill for 55% of the principals, slightly down on the 59% in 2012. This was most likely to be in particular curriculum areas (rather than across the board). Fourteen percent had difficulty filling the role of dean. Most of those who had difficulty filling these positions thought the reason was that the workload was too demanding (72%). Too much paperwork or administration was seen to put people off (54%). The additional money for middle management roles did not match these roles' additional work hours or responsibility (50% each). Some schools lacked staff with the experience needed to lead other staff in these roles (24%). Some principals thought the nature of the school community put applicants off (17%).

## Challenges associated with school decile and size

Decile 1–2 schools had the most difficulty recruiting: 75% of their principals generally had difficulty filling their vacancies with suitable teachers, compared with 31% of decile 3–4 schools, and 17% of decile 9–10 schools. Forty percent of decile 1–2 schools also had difficulty finding suitable teachers for middle management roles, compared with 10% of decile 3–4 schools, and 11% of decile 9–10 schools. Filling these roles in specific curriculum areas was more of an issue for decile 3–8 schools (43%, compared with 20% of decile 1–2 schools, and 22% of decile 9–10 schools). The nature of the school community and a too demanding workload were seen by half the decile 1–2 principals as reasons why they had difficulty filling middle management roles.

School size showed some relationships with recruiting challenges. The larger the school, the more difficulty there was finding teachers for particular curriculum areas, perhaps reflecting the wider range of areas offered by larger schools. Eighty-one percent of the largest schools had such difficulty, as did around half the schools in the small–medium to medium–large categories, and 21% of the small schools.



## School roll and competition

In a system based on stand-alone schools, each school is responsible for its own viability in terms of roll numbers. Relationships between schools are often competitive.

Most secondary schools (80%) were directly competing with a median of four other secondary schools for students. This is unchanged since 2012. The competition may have sharpened somewhat: 68% now had places for all the students who applied to go to the school, up from 59% in 2012 (and 60% in 2009).<sup>76</sup> Somewhat more secondary schools have also put in place an enrolment scheme (40% in 2015, compared with 36% in 2012) even though 43% of these schools had room for all who apply, and another 14% had room for all applicants at the start of the school year.

While a quarter of these schools with enrolment schemes drew only up to 5% of their students from beyond their zone, 34% drew 6–20% from beyond their zone, 18% drew 21–40% and 16% had more than 40% of their students coming from out of zone. Thus school zones often do not reflect real pressure on places from the local area. The recent consultation on the Update of the Education Act raised some questions about school zoning: these data point to the need for a more coherent approach at the local level to ensure that there are sufficient viable schools to meet needs, so that public funding can go more to the quality of teaching and learning than on additional property and marketing costs associated with having an oversupply of schools in some areas.

Two-thirds of the secondary schools were said to have a student profile similar to the local community, including 78% of those with an enrolment scheme, and 59% of those without an enrolment scheme; more schools without enrolment schemes appear to be drawing from wider catchment areas than those with enrolment schemes.

Compared with 2012, fewer schools had more Māori students than their local community (15%, compared with 25%) and fewer had more students with low academic aspirations than in their local community (8%, compared with 15%).

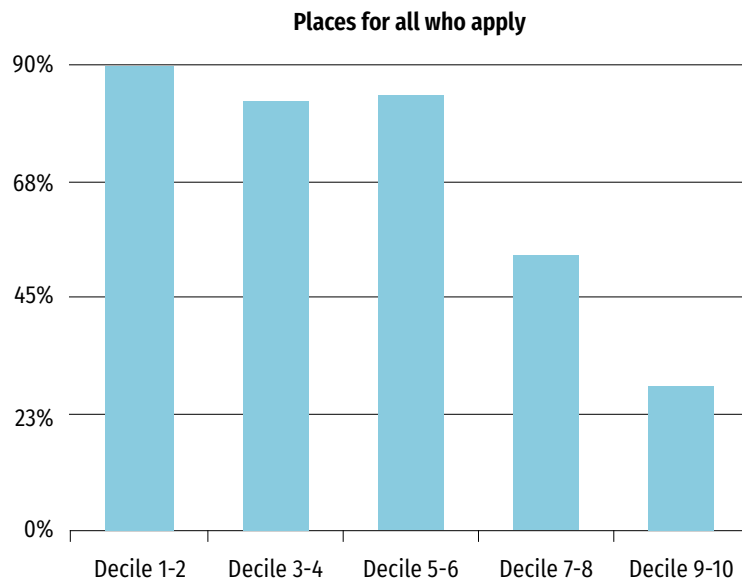
The proportion taking more students from low-income families than were present in their local community was 27%, much the same as in 2012. More schools without enrolment schemes took more students from low-income families than present in their local community: 35% did so, compared with 15% of schools with an enrolment scheme.

Competition for students was experienced across all school deciles. Figure 50 shows how school capacity is related to school decile.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> The national number of students in secondary schools was 272,227 in 2015, only slightly less than the 273,409 in 2009. (Source: Education Counts, Student Roll by School Type as at 1 July 1996–2015).

<sup>77</sup> Documentation of how low-decile schools have lost students over the past 20 years and high-decile schools have grown is given in Gordon, L. (2015). 'Rich' and 'poor' schools revisited. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 50(1), 7–22.

FIGURE 50 Secondary school capacity 2015



Enrolment schemes also followed school decile, ranging from 72% of the decile 9–10 schools having one, to 20% of the decile 1–2 schools.

Decile 9–10 school principals thought they had more students from higher-income families than the local community (25%, compared with none of the decile 1–4 schools) and similarly more Pākehā students (17%) and more Asian students (14%). Conversely, half the decile 1–4 school principals thought they had more students from lower-income families than their local community. Decile 3–4 school principals were more likely to say that they had more Māori students than their local community (38%, compared with 20% of decile 1–2 schools, and 3% of decile 9–10 schools).

The smaller the school the greater the ability to take all students who applied, and the less likely it was that the student profile was similar to the local community (14%, increasing to 89% of the large schools). Enrolment schemes existed in all the large schools, 54% of the medium–large schools and 14% of the small schools.

Principals of the smallest schools were more likely to say their school had more students from lower-income families than the local area (64%, compared with 24% of the principals of small–medium schools, and 4% of principals of the large schools).

Thirty-eight percent of metropolitan schools did not have places for all the students who applied to them, compared with 12% of small city schools and none of the rural and town schools. However, two of the nine rural schools had enrolment schemes, as did 10% of the town schools, 24% of small city schools and 54% of metropolitan schools.

Having more students from higher-income families and with high academic aspirations than the local community was reported most often by principals of small city schools (24% and 35% respectively). Competition for students was lower for rural and town schools (67%, compared with 84% for metropolitan, and 94% for small city schools).

## Summary and discussion

While only 14% of secondary principals in 2015 thought their school's government funding enough to meet its needs, funding per se was identified as a major issue for their school by only 51% of principals. Why might this be? The indications are that schools have become much more focused on managing the funding available to them, with almost half now able to have stability in their financial situation, and almost half reducing their spending, even at the cost of co-curricular experiences, curriculum resourcing, the inclusion of practical components in courses and, to a lesser extent, the breadth of curriculum options they can offer to suit the diversity of students.

Just over half the schools were also reliant on non-government resources, particularly international students (are there any other education systems so dependent on this source?). Digital technology use for learning was also dependent on parental provision in just over half the schools.

Only 24% of secondary principals believed their school's entitlement staffing was sufficient to meet their school's needs, and 76% employed additional teachers, for *NZC* areas as well as to meet the needs of diverse students, including international students.

Many secondary principals had difficulty finding suitable teachers to fill their school vacancies: 30% generally, and 51% in particular curriculum areas. Finding te reo Māori teachers was a difficulty for 31% of the principals, particularly teaching the language at a high level.

Middle management positions were also difficult to fill for 55% of the principals, largely because of the workload.

Competition for students has sharpened somewhat since 2012. While 40% of secondary schools now have enrolment zones, these zones do not seem to reflect real pressure for places within the local area, with 34% of zoned schools drawing more than 20% of their students beyond their zone. Competition for students was highest in metropolitan and small city schools.

Decile 9–10 schools were in the most stable situation and decile 1–2 schools generally in the most challenging situation with regard to funding, staffing and competition.

# 11.

## Support and challenge

**The overall quality of a country's schools is affected by how well the government agencies responsible for education are able to provide both support and challenge for ongoing improvement.<sup>78</sup> In this chapter we start with schools' experiences of ERO, the government agency responsible for external evaluation of individual schools and providing advice through their reviews and national overviews of the quality of provision in schools. Then we turn to principal perceptions of their interactions with the Ministry of Education and other government agencies; to school support from sector organisations; and their access to external expertise.**

### ERO experiences

Schools appear to have been improving in terms of ERO review results. Eight percent of the principals said their school's next review was to be in 1–2 years' time, compared with 14% in their previous ERO review. Twenty-five percent of the principals reported a 4–5-year review return when their school was last reviewed, compared with 15% for their previous ERO review.<sup>79</sup> Not all those who had had a 4–5-year review return in their previous review remained at this level: 39% did not. This is worth bearing in mind in light of the suggestion in the consultation document on the Update of the Education Act that schools deemed to be doing very well could be treated differently from others.

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78 Fullan, M. (2010). *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Wylie, C. (2012). *Vital connections: Why we need more than self-managing schools*. Wellington: NZCER Press.

79 This is close to ERO national figures as at 31 December 2015: 24% of secondary schools were in the 4–5-year review return category, 65% in the 3-year review return category and 10% in the 1–2-year review return category. (Data supplied by ERO, 15 March 2016.)

School socioeconomic status was associated with whether schools were currently on a 4–5-year review return, rising from 5% of decile 1–2 secondary schools to 53% of decile 9–10 schools.<sup>80</sup> Thirty percent of the decile 1–2 schools were on the 1–2-year review return.<sup>81</sup> Most of the schools that had moved from a 3-year review return in their previous ERO review to a 4–5-year review return in their most recent ERO review were decile 5–10 schools.

More schools on a current 4–5-year review return had stable leadership over a 10-year period: 89% of these schools had one or two principals in that time, compared with 66% of those on the 3-year review return cycle, and 47% of those on the 1–2-year review return.

## Experiences of ERO

Most secondary principals were positive about their interactions with ERO and ERO reviews, as shown in Figure 51 below. Many had used their last ERO review report in their strategic planning, and made changes in their school as a result of ERO's national reports. Just over half the principals said their school made changes as a result of ERO's 2014 national reports on secondary schooling. Some uncertainty remained in principals' minds about the reliability of ERO review reports as a whole.

Principals of schools currently on the 4–5-year review report cycle were more likely to strongly agree that their last ERO review had focused on goals or progress towards those goals (52%, compared with 19% of those on the 3-year review report cycle and 7% of those on the 1–2-year review report cycle). This may indicate that those schools had particularly clear goals and evidence of progress towards them: that the strategic planning processes in these schools were working effectively. Not surprisingly, higher proportions of principals whose schools were on the 4–5-year review report cycle also strongly agreed that ERO reports were reliable indicators of teaching/learning quality (30%, compared with 9% of those on the 3-year review report cycle, and none of those on the 1–2-year review report cycle), and of school improvement capacity (28%, compared with 8% of those on the 3-year review report cycle, and none of those on the 1–2-year review report cycle). Interestingly, there were no differences between the three groups of schools when it came to making use of their own review reports or national reports, suggesting that what schools are taking out of these reports—*how* they are using them—warrants a closer look.

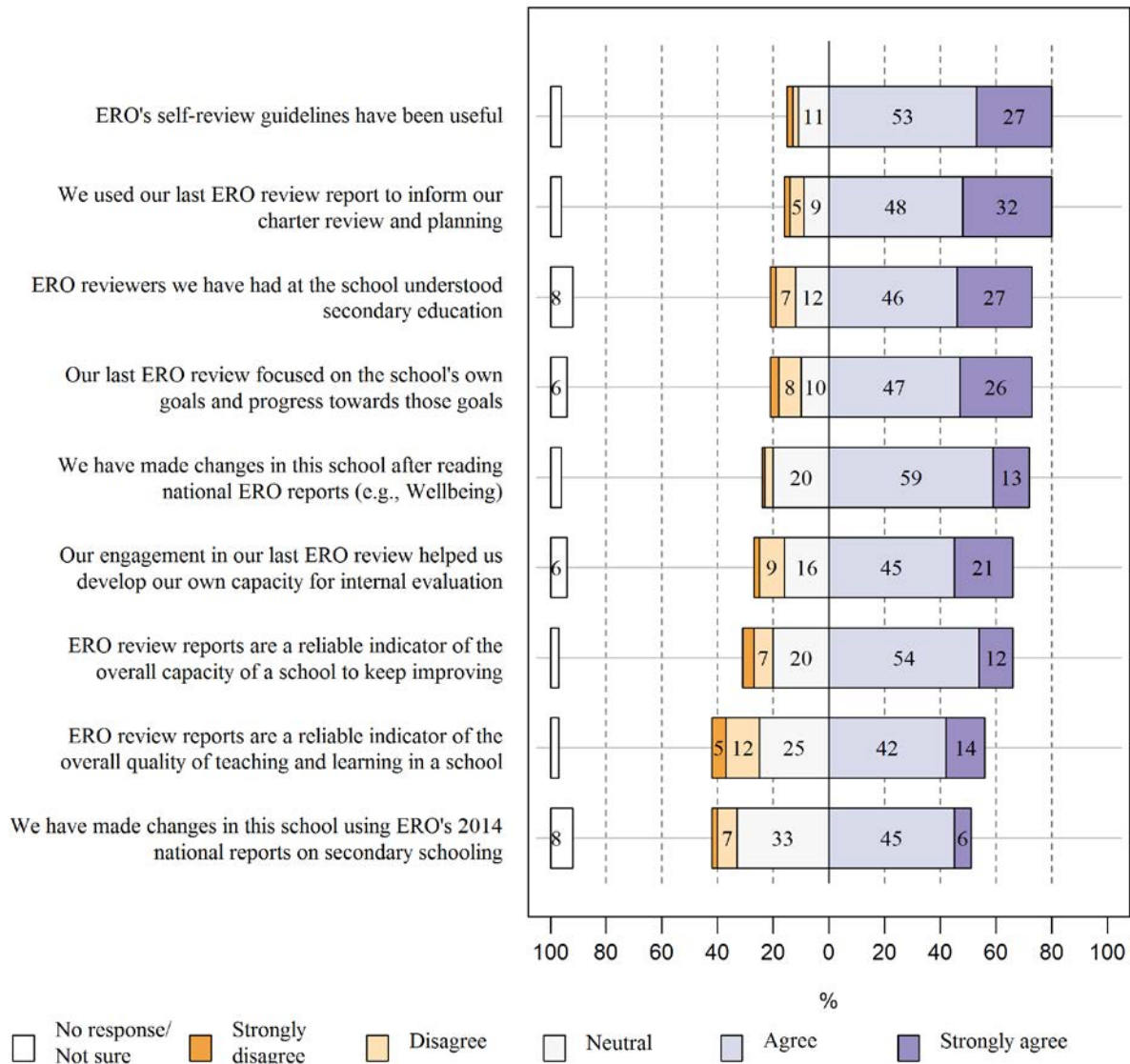
Principals' use of ERO reports and reviews and their views of ERO were largely unrelated to their school decile. Decile 9–10 schools were less likely to use their ERO review report to inform their charter review and planning (70%, compared with around 85% for other schools).

Principals took notice of new ERO publications concerning its work with schools: 88% of the secondary principals had read ERO's new evaluation indicators in their draft form, which were circulated not long before our 2015 national survey.

80 No rural principals reported their school having a 4–5-year review return, and 22% had a 1–2-year review return. However, we have responses from only nine rural principals so we report these figures with some caution. There are 15 rural secondary schools nationwide.

81 ERO national figures for secondary schools as at 31 December 2015 showed 10% of decile 1–2 schools in the 4–5-year review return category and 58% of the decile 9–10 schools; 26% of decile 1–2 schools in the 1–2-year review return category and none of the decile 9–10 schools. (Data supplied by ERO, 15 March 2016.)

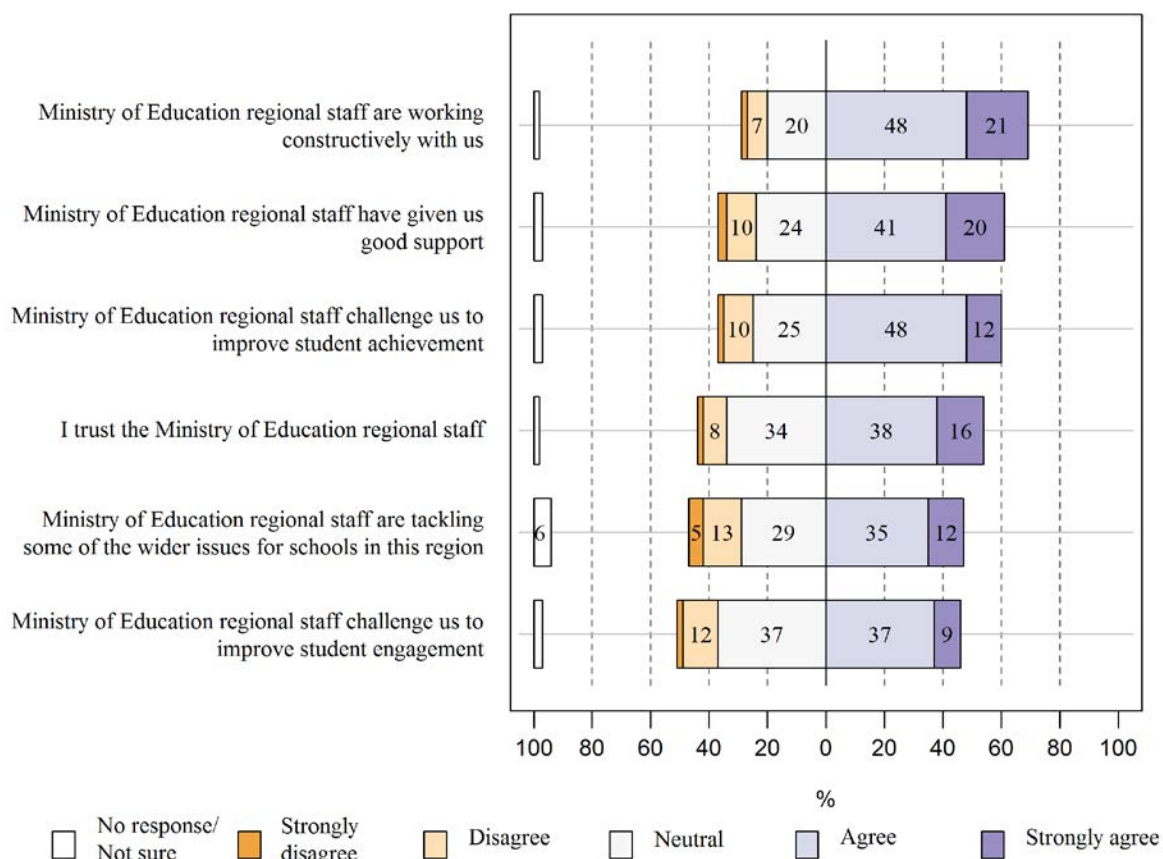
FIGURE 51 Secondary principals' views and use of ERO reviews and reports (n = 182)



### Interactions with the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education consolidated its regional and district offices into 10 regions several years ago, with the aim of having regional staff build a more active relationship with schools. Figure 52 shows that two-thirds of secondary principals thought Ministry of Education regional staff worked constructively with them; around half trusted them, and saw them as a source of good support and challenge to improve student engagement and achievement

FIGURE 52 Principal views of their regional Ministry of Education staff (n = 182)



Judging by principal responses, Ministry of Education regional staff worked most with decile 1–2 schools in 2015. Higher proportions of the principals of these schools than principals of higher-decile schools strongly agreed that Ministry of Education regional staff:

- worked constructively with them (45%)
- tackled wider issues for schools (40%)
- challenged them to improve student engagement (35%)
- challenged them to improve achievement (30%).

Principal views about their getting good support from the regional Ministry of Education staff and trusting them were unrelated to school decile.

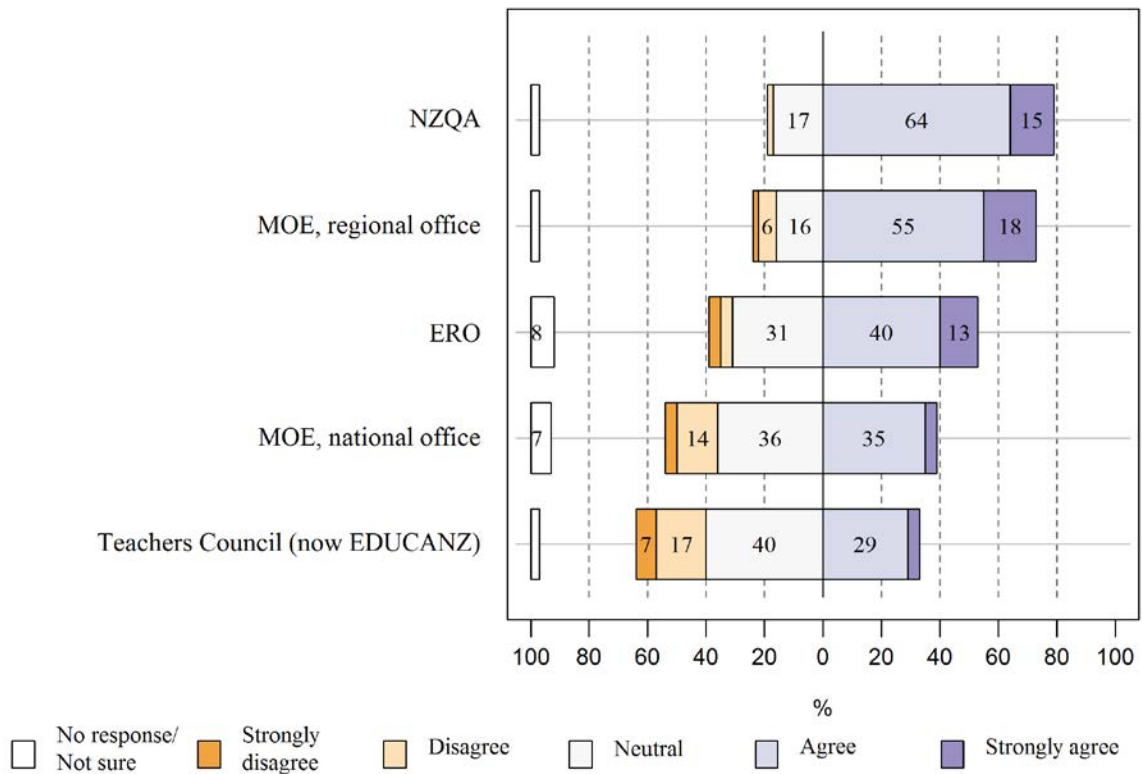
### Views of advice

Secondary schools are complex organisations. They use a range of advice and support as they navigate their way through legal and moral responsibilities, including the core curriculum and assessment, finances and property, and student wellbeing and welfare and chart their own course. We asked principals how helpful they had found the advice they received from a range of government agencies and sector groups.

Figure 53 shows that most secondary principals found the advice they get from government agencies helpful, ranging from 79% finding NZQA advice helpful, to 33% finding the then EDUCANZ helpful.



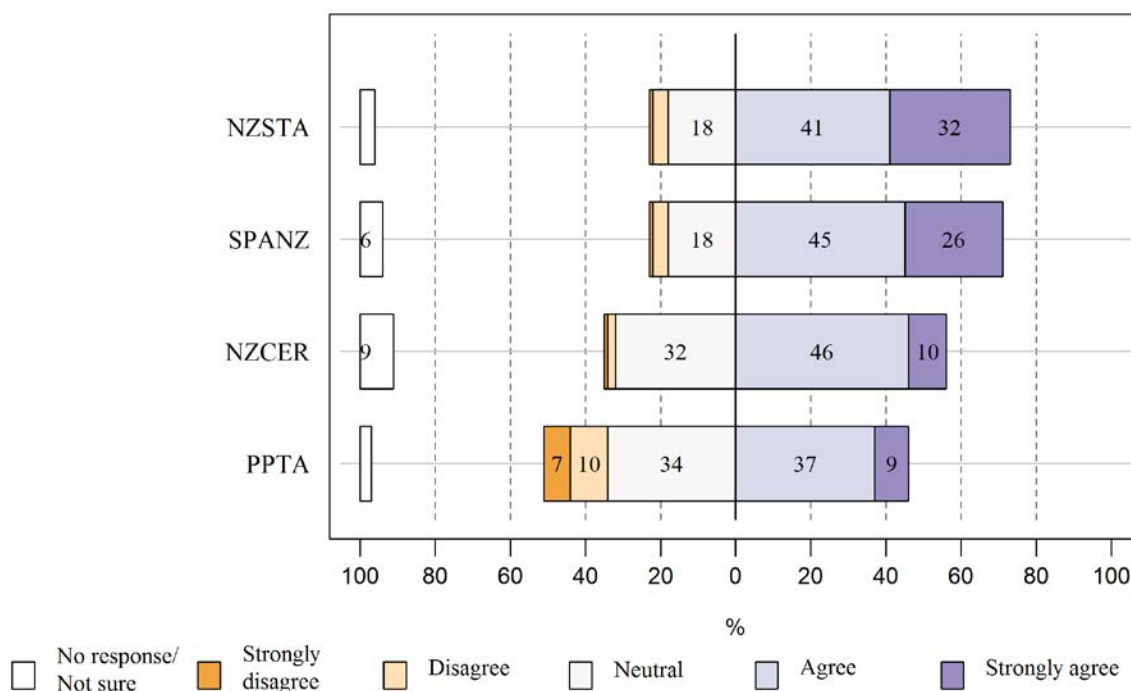
FIGURE 53 Principals' views of the helpfulness of the advice they get from government agencies (n = 182)



When it came to getting helpful advice from the agencies who work with schools to support individual students, the picture was somewhat less positive. The full picture is given in Figure 26, *Chapter 5: Supporting students' wellbeing*.

Principals were largely positive about NZSTA, which is contracted by the Government to support boards of trustees and their responsibilities, and is well used by principals. They were also largely positive about NZCER, whose statutory role includes providing research-based advice, and their own organisations, though 17% did not think they had had helpful advice from the PPTA. Figure 54 has the details.

FIGURE 54 Principals' views of helpfulness of advice from other organisations (n = 182)



More decile 1–2 school principals strongly agreed they got helpful advice from the Ministry of Education regional office (40%): this was the only decile-related difference in principal views of the helpfulness of the advice they got from government agencies and support bodies.

### Access to external expertise

Most secondary principals thought that they could access external expertise needed by their school. A minority could not access such advice and support for:

- working with students with mental health issues (36%)
- making the best choices on a tight budget (28%)
- reliable strategies for Māori and Pasifika student learning (20% each)
- embedding the NZC key competencies into all subject areas (20%)
- selecting effective external support for the school's professional learning and development (21%)
- implementing 21st century approaches to learning (17%).

There have been some notable improvements in school access to external expertise since 2012 in some areas:

- using data to improve teaching and learning (7% could not access this in 2015, compared with 27% in 2012)
- improving academic counselling for students (13% could not access this in 2015, compared with 26% in 2012)
- implementing 21st century approaches to learning (17% could not access this in 2015, compared with 31% in 2012)

- working with students with mental health issues (36% could not access this in 2015, compared with 51% in 2012)
- improving student behaviour (8% could not access this in 2015, compared with 19% in 2012).

Many decile 9–10 school principals said their school did not need external expertise to support them in improving school behaviour (50%, compared with 15% of decile 1–2 school principals), and fewer thought they needed external expertise to improve academic counselling for students (33%, compared with 0% of decile 1–2 school principals) or to implement 21st century approaches to learning (19%, compared with 5% of decile 1–2 school principals).

Higher proportions of decile 7–8 school principals could not access external expertise to improve academic counselling for students (29%), and higher proportions of decile 5–6 school principals could not access external expertise to help them select effective PLD (36%) or implement 21st century approaches to learning (34%).

### Summary and discussion

If we were evaluating the support and challenge given to schools by the government agencies and sector organisations in terms of the 3-tier status used by ERO, the material in this chapter suggests we would be looking somewhere in the broad category of a 3-year return. There were strengths in some areas, particularly in the focused work with ERO and NZQA, which gives schools both guidance and motivation to keep improving. Interactions with the regional Ministry of Education offices were largely positive by mid-2015, with signs that trust had largely been established, many experiencing good support, and just under half good challenge. The picture was more varied when it came to the Ministry of Education national office (responsible for funding and property as well as policy), and the then EDUCANZ. And it shifts into the negative when it comes to getting co-ordinated support for individual students with high needs from non-education agencies. It will be interesting to see when we return to secondary schools in 2018 if the recently announced restructure of CYF improves principals' perceptions here.

It is heartening to report that there have been some real gains since 2012 in secondary schools' access to needed external expertise. However, there are some areas that continue to present problems for substantial minorities of secondary schools, indicating needs that cannot be met by asking schools to source their own advice.

# 12.

## Communities of Schools

**A major new policy, Investing in Educational Success, was announced in January 2014, seeking to make more of the knowledge held within each school and ensure that knowledge about each student was shared as they moved onto the next education level. This main plank of this policy is to form voluntary Communities of Schools (CoS) of one or two secondary schools with their main feeder primary and intermediate schools.**

The schools making up each CoS identify shared achievement challenges and work together to improve teaching and learning outcomes. The new policy came with new additional funding for new roles in addition to existing roles (across the Community for a leader, and for teachers to spearhead the sharing of expertise; and for lead teachers to support the sharing of expertise from across the CoS within their own school). A working party of the Ministry of Education and sector groups forged common agreement on the details, but the primary schools sought more discretion around the use of the additional funding and membership of each Community. At the time of the secondary national survey, the outcome of further joint work between New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) and the Ministry of Education undertaken in the first half of 2015 was out with NZEI members for voting. When this joint work was accepted, it resulted in somewhat less money going to the CoS positions, allowing somewhat more money to access other support, and allowed for the inclusion of early childhood education centres, without funding for new roles. This joint initiative used the term Communities of Learning (CoL), which resonated well with the goal of the policy, and so CoL has become the term used for CoS. In this report, however, we stick with CoS since that is how we phrased our questions.<sup>82</sup>

At the time of the survey, CoS were in their very early stages of formation. Twenty-nine CoS had been approved, and a few of these had started work on identifying their achievement challenges by discussing data and information across their member schools. Another 100 or so CoS had registered expressions of interest. We therefore asked questions about what people expected of CoS, as well as continuing to ask

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<sup>82</sup> For further information, see <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/specific-initiatives/investing-in-educational-success/communities-of-schools-making-a-difference/>

questions on how secondary schools had worked with other schools and the tertiary sector, to see what experience of working collectively they could bring to the new approach, which is a much more specific framework and purpose than previous clusters or individual arrangements.<sup>83</sup>

## Background experience of working with other schools

Many secondary schools already had some kind of existing relationship with local primary schools around the transition to secondary school, and just over half with the local intermediate (not all secondary schools have a feeder intermediate). Table 46 below shows that other ongoing working relations with other schools were mainly with other secondary schools, particularly to provide links for sole subject providers, and inter-school visits, which have increased since 2009. Only the latter and liaison with local intermediates had increased since 2012.

Around a third of the secondary schools were in clusters, including the Learning and Change networks, partially funded by the Ministry of Education, or, interestingly, continuing on with clusters whose Ministry of Education funding stopped some years back.

The new CoS were therefore being formed from quite varied secondary school experiences of working together with other schools.

TABLE 46 Existing secondary school joint work with other schools (principal report); 2012 and 2015

Kind of joint work	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Liaison with local primary schools on transition to secondary school	81	75
Support for teachers if sole subject provider in school	63	63
Liaison with local intermediates on transition to secondary school	53	59
Inter-school visits to learn from each other	41	54
Regular meetings of schools as a group with social agencies	51	46
Work together to place students having difficulty in one school into another school	42	36
Work with other local schools to reduce truancy	29	29
Voluntary cluster after end of ICT/EHSAS cluster	23	21
Part of a Learning and Change network	*	14
Administrative support cluster	15	9

\* Not asked

## Background experience of working with post-secondary providers

Almost all the secondary schools had also worked with one or more of their local post-secondary education providers (2% had no such provider locally, and 1% had no or limited contact with theirs). Most of this interaction was contractual—the secondary schools augmenting what they could offer their

83 Material in this chapter was shared with the Ministry of Education in December 2015, to inform its work developing and supporting the CoS.

students through the additional government funding of STAR, Gateway or an Academy. Gateway and Academy work with post-secondary education providers had increased markedly since 2012, as shown in Table 47 below, without increasing the frequency of competition between schools and post-secondary providers.

Most schools also had some liaison in relation to student pathways (we did not ask whether this was in relation to individual pathways or more general information to feed into student thinking about where their secondary education could lead).

TABLE 47 Secondary school interactions with local post-secondary education providers; 2012 and 2015

Kind of interaction with post-secondary	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %
Use to provide STAR courses	88	89
Liaison to support student pathways	*	88
Use to provide Gateway courses	61	78
School is part of a Trades/Service Academy	37	64
Share information on students	31	31
Some competition with local post-secondary education providers	22	18

\* Not asked

## Interest in joining a CoS

At this stage, 65% of the secondary principals were interested in their school joining a CoS. Twenty-three percent were unsure; 9% did not want to join a CoS. A quarter identified the decision about joining a CoS as one of the major issues facing their school.<sup>84</sup>

Although only 42% of secondary trustees thought the CoS approach was clear to them, 45% said their board was interested in joining a CoS, 41% were unsure and 9% thought their board did not want to join a CoS. More trustees in decile 9–10 schools said their board was not interested in joining a CoS (23%) and that they could see no benefits for their own school (23% also).

We also asked principals and trustees what their school's current CoS position was. Around a fifth said they were already part of a CoS (presumably including those at the Expression of Interest stage). Almost half the principals were discussing the possibility with other schools. Some caution was expressed by 29% of the principals who were either waiting to see how the first CoLs worked out, did not think the current model would work or did not see benefits for their school. Table 48 has the details.

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter 11: Support and challenge for the full picture of issues principals, trustees, teachers and parents identified as facing their school.

TABLE 48 School position in relation to CoS

Position	Principals (n = 182) %	Trustees (n = 232) %
Already part of a CoS	18	22
Discussing it with other schools	49	19
Discussing it internally	17	15
Considering it	15	18
Waiting to see how first CoS works out	18	13
Do not think the current model will work	12	4
Do not see benefits for our school	5	9

Decile 9–10 school principals were least likely to be discussing becoming part of a CoS with other schools (36%, compared with 65% of decile 1–2 school principals). Fourteen percent of decile 9–10 school principals and 6% of decile 5–6 school principals saw no benefits to them in being part of a CoS.

### Teacher interest in the new professional learning roles

We asked teachers whether they were interested in the new CoS roles, and found that interest was high enough that these roles should be readily filled if teachers meet the national criteria. All told, 36% of teachers were interested in one or both of these roles: 27% were interested in the across-CoS teacher role and 25% in the *within-school* CoS role. Greatest interest in the across-CoS role came from specialist classroom teachers (36%) who already work across their school to support teaching, followed by deputy assistant principals, then heads of departments and those with management units. Classroom teachers without additional roles were least interested (17%). There was almost the reverse pattern in terms of interest in the *within-school* CoS role, with classroom teachers showing the greatest interest (40%), followed by heads of departments (29%) and by senior classroom teachers who currently have some responsibility to share and improve pedagogy across secondary departments (18%). Decile 7–10 school teachers (with and without existing additional responsibilities) were somewhat less interested in the new CoS roles than teachers in decile 1–6 schools.

We asked teachers if they would like to comment on these new roles, and 24% did so. While 18% of these comments were positive about the purpose of the CoS, 23% were uncertain about the nature of the new roles, and most of the comments voiced some scepticism or concern, particularly about:

- how well these roles would work in practice without adding to high workloads, or at the cost of the teachers' own classes
- whether it would mean some schools contributing more than others, at the cost of their own school's quality or staff workloads
- whether CoS were sufficiently resourced to enable good sharing of good practice across schools
- whether sharing in this way would really make a difference to the quality of teaching, with comments about wanting to work more with other secondary teachers in their subject area, rather than with primary teachers



- whether those chosen for the new roles would really hold their colleagues' respect as good teachers, and have proven ability, whether the money going into CoS would be better spent within schools (e.g., on reducing class sizes)
- whether the new roles would supplant or make less attractive existing within-school roles supporting teacher practice changes, such as senior classroom teachers.

## What people expected of CoS

We asked principals and trustees what they thought CoS would offer overall, and teachers what difference being in a CoS would make for their professional learning.

Table 49 shows that principals had higher expectations than trustees (perhaps because quite a few of the trustees were not clear at this stage what a CoS was) in terms of the policy purpose. It also shows, however, that these expectations were not as strong as the policy makers would hope, with just over half seeing gains in tackling achievement and engagement more successfully, and around two-thirds seeing an improvement in the transition to secondary school.

TABLE 49 Expectations in relation to the policy purpose of CoS

Expectation	Principals (n = 182) %	Trustees (n = 232) %
More sharing of useful knowledge for teaching and learning	75	64
Improve student transition to secondary school	65	50
More use of effective inquiry to improve teaching and learning	58	37
More traction on tackling issues around student achievement	57	39
More traction on tackling issues around student engagement	53	37

Decile 1–2 school principals were the most optimistic that CoS would bring greater use of effective inquiry to improve teaching and learning, and get more traction on tackling the issues around student achievement. Among trustees, it was also those from decile 1–2 schools who were the most optimistic that CoS would lead to more use of effective inquiry to improve teaching and learning, and also reduce competition between schools.

Table 50 shows more of the expectations principals and trustees had about the difference CoS could make in terms of relations between schools, resources and support. These were not as high as expectations related to the policy purposes. Trustees did have higher expectations than principals that CoS would lead to the sharing of specialist facilities or equipment, and better professional support for principals.

TABLE 50 Expectations of CoS in relation to relations between schools, resources and support

Expectation	Principals (n = 182) %	Trustees (n = 232) %
Better opportunities to access new funding sources	35	21
Sharing of specialist facilities/equipment	30	41
Better professional support for principals	23	36
More of a "shared team" approach between school sector and Ministry of Education	23	25
Better interaction with the local Ministry of Education	20	17
More effective work with social agencies	18	19
Improvement of transitions for te reo Māori learners from immersion settings to English-medium	16	16
Provide more subjects/courses than the school can offer on its own	15	22
Less competition between schools for students	11	17
Schools in a CoS having a single board of trustees	7	7

Trustees in provincial cities were most likely to expect that a CoS could provide more subjects or courses than their own school. Otherwise there were no differences related to school location.

## Benefits and drawbacks

Principals were asked to comment on the benefits or drawbacks they saw with CoS. Of the 119 principals who commented, 59 noted potential benefits, and 88 noted potential drawbacks; some saw both, as this comment illustrates:

Drawbacks: how to replace the expertise of any people released. Why would you release an excellent teacher to replace them with a relief teacher who was not as capable? This negatively affects student outcomes. Benefits: Greater sharing between schools. Smoother transitions. Shared thinking and new knowledge created between Primary and Secondary sectors.

Much depends on the community it serves. Problems of overly competitive high schools. Problems of rivalry, cultural issues. But we will set up, and if the 'niggles' can be overcome, then it should be successful.

The main benefits identified:

- improved transitions to secondary school (20% of the comments)
  - Coherence and consistency possible for students as they move through the community from primary to secondary.
  - Sharing of knowledge about students and expectations for their learning.
- sharing expertise and learning together (18% of the comments)—with indications that this covers a range of expectations and views about the relationship of secondary schools and their approach, to primary schools and their approach
  - Better sharing of achievement data; Better sharing of good pedagogical practice; Better understanding of the issues impacting on student success or lack of it.

Unlocking expertise and skills available only in one school to share with others.

Flexibility, relationships, strongly student-centred, shift in education paradigm for secondary teachers.

Great opportunity to link secondary with primary. Demystifying secondary.

The drawbacks principals saw were related to increases in their own and their teachers' workload, loss of good-quality teachers to work across schools, wanting more flexibility with the form of a CoS and the use of its resources, and competition between schools. Experiences of working with the Ministry of Education to identify and develop CoS had not always been positive.

## Teachers' expectations of CoS

Since teachers' professional learning is core to the work of CoS, we asked them for comments on the difference they thought being in a CoS would make for their professional learning. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers made a comment. Thirty-one percent voiced positive expectations, 12% negative expectations including scepticism that CoS would have any impact on secondary teachers' professional learning, and that the benefits for learning would outweigh the costs in terms of workload and distraction. Some included both positive hopes and scepticism in their comments. Ten percent said they did not know anything about CoS, or that it was too soon to tell. Some hoped for more subject-specific sharing with other secondary teachers, which was not a key feature of the CoS.

Those who saw greater opportunities for professional learning mentioned the sharing of good practice and teaching resources, and knowledge of students that would support their progress more; some mentioned positive experiences they had had collaborating with others. Some illustrations:

Very positive. It has a great opportunity to provide shared/collaborative resources and reduce individual teacher workload.

Increase opportunity for moderation. Better resource sharing. If vertical community—there's more sequential development of core skills.

With Year 9s, a better understanding of their needs, levels and abilities to assist with course planning and meeting their needs. Better opportunities to discuss amongst teachers issues and ideas; ability to adapt others ideas to meet your own needs.

Illustrations of mixed feelings:

Lovely idea ... finding the time (even with the allowance) to engage in the learning opportunity something like this would offer is the real problem. I like the idea of working with a primary school to look at differentiation in the classroom, and curriculum mapping from primary through to secondary would be awesome, but there is just no time in what is already a busy year filled with marking and assessment feedback to engage in the CoS programme.

Little effect as it is not about putting multiple high schools together so little subject support is likely to be offered. It may help teachers in high schools learn how to group students and differentiate more effectively but only within the confines of the timetable.

This depends on which schools are involved and the structures. This would only be useful if we worked with innovative schools and not traditional schools. It would likely have minimal influence on real classroom practice and outcomes (could get dragged down).

It could make educational practice in an area more cohesive. As far as my professional learning goes, it could be helpful, I suppose, but I'm wary that it is only going to increase my workload further. It is my workload that has the strongest bearing on the quality of my lessons and my ability to implement new learning.

Illustrations of low expectations:

Not much. As a specialist Visual Arts teacher, primary/intermediate teachers etc. have very little understanding of NCEA etc. What we need are our FACILITATORS of Visual Arts, 'SPECIFIC' help!! How can we prepare students for future pathways with the wrong support? Should be more industry + specialist people involved.

What are the new Communities of Schools? If you mean an 'expert' comes and helps me at the expense of their own class, then it may be a little helpful, but if I'm the expert then I am more concerned about the needs of my own students during school time.

## Summary and discussion

Communities of Schools (now Communities of Learning) were just starting to form in mid-2015. Sixty-five percent of secondary principals were interested in their school joining a CoL, and 35% of secondary teachers expressed interest in the new within-school or across-CoS roles. Teachers' views of the new roles included positive views of the purpose of CoLs, but also some scepticism about the ability of CoLs to meet their purpose, and concerns about negative impacts for teachers or schools. Principals' expectations of CoLs were highest in relation to the sharing of useful knowledge for teaching and learning, with just over half thinking the CoLs would bring more traction on tackling issues around student achievement and engagement, and a minority expecting more sharing of resources and access to support. Principals saw somewhat more drawbacks than benefits from working in CoLs.

As we write in early April 2016, there are 96 CoLs formed, covering 793 schools. Another tranche of CoLs will be announced soon. Many of the CoLs are still finalising their achievement challenges and starting to make the across-school and within-school appointments.

These are still very early days for the CoLs, and it appears as if it will take at least a few more years before some of the questions secondary teachers and to a lesser extent secondary principals voiced in this survey about what shape they will actually take and the impact that would have on everyday teaching can start to be answered. It will be very interesting to return to the expectations and queries voiced in the 2015 national secondary survey in 2018 to see whether the gains are showing, and outweighing the costs that some feared; and whether the CoL approach is gradually changing secondary pedagogy, and coherence across primary and secondary schooling, or has become another "add-on" to already high workloads.

# 13.

## Issues facing secondary schools in 2015

**We asked all four groups surveyed what they thought were the major issues facing their school, if any, and gave each group the same set of 19 items. These give a good overview of common concerns. Principals identify the greatest number of issues, followed by teachers. A third of the parents responding did not identify any issues facing their child's school.**

Table 51 brings together the picture from all four groups, with the “top 10” issues for each group in bold. Changes from responses in 2012 and 2009 are also shown.

Most notable changes over the past 6 years are that funding is no longer the top issue identified across the board—as it had been previously for more than a decade—and that concern about student behaviour has been dropping since 2009, probably reflecting the emphasis and support given to schools to rethink their approach with the PB4L strategy.

What is foremost for *principals and teachers* is the weight of assessment, and associated with that for teachers, motivating students.

Resources are the two prime concerns for *trustees*: property and funding.

*Parents* are concerned that their school can provide good curriculum options, attract and keep good teachers, and about student behaviour.

While the adequacy of digital technology and Internet access is less of a concern than in 2012, dealing with the inappropriate use of technology was a shared concern across all four groups in 2015.

TABLE 51 Major issues facing secondary schools

Issue	Principals (n = 182) %	Teachers (n = 1,777) %	Trustees (n = 232) %	Parents (n = 1,242) %
NCEA workload for teachers	65 <sup>++</sup>	51 <sup>-+</sup>	16 <sup>-</sup>	8
Assessment driving the curriculum	<b>56<sup>++</sup></b>	<b>49<sup>^+</sup></b>	<b>8<sup>-</sup></b>	7
Funding	51 <sup>--</sup>	29 <sup>--</sup>	37	14 <sup>--</sup>
Property maintenance/development	<b>49<sup>+--</sup></b>	<b>26<sup>--</sup></b>	44 <sup>+--</sup>	<b>11<sup>^-</sup></b>
Providing good curriculum options for all students	42	30	22	24 <sup>^</sup>
Parent and whānau engagement	<b>40</b>	21 <sup>^^</sup>	20	<b>11<sup>^^</sup></b>
Motivating students	<b>39<sup>^-</sup></b>	<b>53<sup>^+</sup></b>	18 <sup>^-</sup>	<b>21<sup>--</sup></b>
Dealing with inappropriate use of technology	38	46	11	17
Student achievement levels	36 <sup>^^</sup>	31 <sup>^-</sup>	19 <sup>--</sup>	12 <sup>--</sup>
NCEA workload for students	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>	7	10
Staffing levels/class sizes	34	<b>31<sup>^+</sup></b>	15 <sup>^^</sup>	<b>12<sup>^^</sup></b>
Adequacy of digital technology and Internet access	30 <sup>--</sup>	<b>37<sup>-^</sup></b>	21 <sup>--</sup>	<b>13<sup>^+</sup></b>
Good-quality professional learning and development	28 <sup>-</sup>	22 <sup>-^</sup>	<b>8<sup>--</sup></b>	<b>12</b>
Attracting and keeping good teachers	26	23 <sup>-^</sup>	18	<b>23<sup>-+</sup></b>
Joining a Community of Schools	25	8	10	3
Student behaviour	15 <sup>--</sup>	27 <sup>--</sup>	<b>11<sup>--</sup></b>	<b>21<sup>--</sup></b>
School culture	6	12	5	<b>8</b>
Principal's leadership	1 <sup>-</sup>	16 <sup>-^</sup>	9 <sup>^^</sup>	<b>7<sup>-</sup></b>

Figures in bold are the "top 10" issues for each group.

+ 2015 figure higher than previous survey round. (For example, NCEA workload for teachers is seen as an issue for their school by 65% of principals, and the ++ that follow this number refer first to the 2012 survey and next to the 2009 survey. If only one mark follows a figure, it refers to the 2012 survey round.)

^ 2015 figure much the same as previous survey round.

- 2015 figure lower than previous survey round.

## School socioeconomic differences

Across all four groups, there were consistent associations between the kinds of major issues identified and the school socioeconomic decile. At decile 1–2 schools, the major issues are core ones of motivation, engagement and achievement. At the other end of the range, the major issues at decile 9–10 schools are more to do with the weight given to NCEA assessment.<sup>85</sup>

85 Hipkins, Johnston, and Sheehan provide an invaluable analysis of NCEA (see *NCEA in context* (In press). Wellington: NZCER Press).

Among *principals*, it was those leading decile 1–2 schools who had the highest proportions reporting issues of:

- student achievement levels (90%, decreasing to 11% of the principals of decile 9–10 schools)
- motivating students (65%, decreasing to 8% of the principals of decile 9–10 schools)
- student behaviour (40%, decreasing to none of the principals of decile 9–10 schools).

The principals of decile 9–10 schools had the highest proportions reporting issues of:

- NCEA workload for teachers (86%, decreasing to 45% of decile 3–4 and 55 % of decile 1–2 school principals)
- assessment driving the curriculum (72%, decreasing to 25% of decile 1–2 school principals)
- NCEA workload for students (69%, decreasing to 12% of decile 3–4 and 20% of decile 1–2 school principals).

Among *teachers*, it was those at decile 1–2 schools who had the highest proportion reporting that their school faced issues of:

- motivating students (80%, decreasing to 32% of decile 9–10 school teachers)
- student behaviour (64%, decreasing to 4% of decile 9–10 school teachers)
- student achievement levels (62%, decreasing to 14% of decile 9–10 school teachers)
- parent and whānau engagement (49%, decreasing to 7% of decile 9–10 school teachers)
- providing good curriculum options for all students (39%, decreasing to 24% of decile 9–10 school teachers)
- attracting and keeping good teachers (37%, decreasing to 13% of decile 9–10 school teachers)
- the principal's leadership (29%, decreasing to 7% of decile 9–10 school teachers) and the school culture (28%, decreasing to 6% of decile 9–10 school teachers).

Decile 9–10 school teachers had the highest proportion identifying major issues for their school as being:

- NCEA workload for teachers (58%)
- assessment driving the curriculum (57%)
- students' NCEA workload (54%)

They had the lowest proportion identifying funding as an issue (15%).

*Trustees* of decile 1–2 schools had the highest proportion identifying these issues:

- student achievement levels (41%, decreasing to 10% of decile 9–10 school trustees)
- student behaviour (26%, decreasing to 3% of decile 9–10 school trustees)
- parent and whānau engagement (44%, decreasing to 5% of decile 9–10 school trustees).

And, with decile 3–4 school trustees:

- motivating students (33% of decile 1–2 trustees and 42% of decile 3–4 school trustees, decreasing to 6% of decile 7–8 trustees and 10% of decile 9–10 school trustees).

However, decile 1–2 school trustees had the lowest proportion identifying funding as a major issue for their school (15%).

Decile 9–10 school trustees had the highest proportion identifying NCEA workload for teachers as a major issue (33%).



More *parents* whose child attended a decile 1–2 school identified issues than others, particularly around:

- student behaviour (59%)
- student achievement (31%)
- school culture (23%)
- parent and whānau engagement (23%).

Their principal's leadership was more of an issue for parents with a child in a school that was decile 1–4 (13%). Motivating students was less of a school issue for parents with a child in schools that were decile 7–10 (17%, compared with 29% of those with a child in schools that were decile 1–6).

# Appendix 1:

## Sample characteristics

**The NZCER National Secondary Survey went to the principal, to the board of trustees chair and one other trustee (we asked the board chair to give the survey to someone whose opinion might differ from their own) and to a random sample of one in four teachers at all 313 state and state-integrated secondary schools in New Zealand; and to a random sample of one in four parents at a cross-section of 32 of these schools. Ideally, we would also survey students, but this is not within the scope of this project. The 2015 response rates were 58% for principals ( $n = 182$ ), about 39% for teachers ( $n = 1,777$ ), 37% for trustees ( $n = 232$ ) and about 25% for parents and whānau ( $n = 1,242$ ). Overall, the responses give a good representative picture of New Zealand secondary schools.**

The margin of error for the principals' responses is 7.3%, for teachers' responses around 2.3% and for trustees' responses around 6.4%. Random sampling is needed in order to calculate the margin of error, and because the teacher and trustee samples are not true random samples,<sup>86</sup> these figures are approximations. Because the parent and whānau sample is derived from a cross-section of schools, the margin of error cannot be approximated.

We have reported statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) in responses relating to these school characteristics:

- Decile – indicating the proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, with decile 1 schools having the highest proportion, and decile 10 schools the lowest proportion. We grouped the schools into decile bands for analysis purposes: decile 1–2; decile 3–4; decile 5–6; decile 7–8; decile 9–10.
- Location – rural schools, schools in towns, schools in small cities, and metropolitan schools.

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<sup>86</sup> Because we have no control of how the instructions for random sampling are actually followed in a school, this cannot be called true random sampling.

- Size – small schools with 100-249 students; small-medium schools with 250–399 students; medium schools with 400–749 students; medium-large schools with 750–1,499 students; and large schools with 1,500 students or more.

## Principals and trustees

Surveys were sent to principals and trustees at all 313 state and state-integrated secondary schools. The responses from both groups were broadly representative of the overall demographic profile of New Zealand secondary schools. As the following tables show, there was a slight under-representation of principals at decile 1–2 schools, and trustees at metropolitan schools.

TABLE 52 Profile of principal and trustee responses by school decile bands

Decile bands	New Zealand secondary schools ( <i>n</i> = 313) %	Principals ( <i>n</i> = 182) %	Trustees ( <i>n</i> = 232) %
1–2	14	11	13
3–4	20	23	18
5–6	26	28	27
7–8	22	19	27
9–10	18	20	16

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 53 Profile of principal and trustee responses by school size

School size	New Zealand secondary schools ( <i>n</i> = 313) %	Principals ( <i>n</i> = 182) %	Trustees ( <i>n</i> = 232) %
100-249	7	8	9
250-399	16	21	12
400-749	31	28	32
750-1499	34	31	35
1500+	12	12	13

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 54 Profile of principal and trustee responses by school location

School location	New Zealand secondary schools ( <i>n</i> = 313) %	Principals ( <i>n</i> = 182) %	Trustees ( <i>n</i> = 232) %
Rural	5	5	6
Town	20	21	22
Small city	10	9	11
Metropolitan	65	64	61

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

## Teacher sample

We sent each secondary school surveys for distribution to 1 in 4 teachers, along with instructions for random sampling. We estimated the number of teacher surveys from each school's roll size. Teachers in 10% of the secondary schools were invited to complete the survey online, using the same 1 in 4 random selection process.

Table 55 shows that in the completed surveys, teachers at decile 1–2 and decile 9–10 schools were slightly under-represented.

TABLE 55 Teacher responses in relation to national student population by school decile

Decile bands	Responding teachers ( <i>n</i> = 1,777) %	Student population ( <i>n</i> = 313 schools)	
		Students (number)	Students %
1–2	8	25937	10
3–4	18	40277	15
5–6	25	64918	25
7–8	29	69210	26
9–10	20	62541	24

## Parent and whānau sample

The 2015 NZCER secondary national survey parent and whānau sample provides a cross-section that has sufficient numbers of parents with different social characteristics, such as ethnicity and qualification levels, to check for differences in experiences and views.

The parent and whānau sample is based on a sample of 32 schools, randomly selected to provide a good cross-section of schools according to decile bands and roll size within the decile bands. While the parent and whānau school sample is not expected to be as representative of school characteristics, it gave a fair overall picture, with variation noticeable in school location: 50% of the schools whose parents completed surveys were metropolitan schools, which make up 65% of all state and state-integrated secondary

schools; 40% of the schools whose parents did surveys were in small cities, which make up 20% of all schools.

We compared the number of surveys sent to each school where we had responses, with the number of surveys returned, according to school decile (see Table 56). Numbers are higher for high-decile schools because they are generally larger than other schools. Response rates were lowest for the decile 1–2 schools.

TABLE 56 **Profile of parent and whānau responses by school decile bands**

Decile bands	2015 surveys sent to school (n.)	2015 surveys returned (n)	2015 response rate %
1–2	522	39	7
3–4	593	178	30
5–6	861	211	25
7–8	1,655	504	30
9–10	1,431	310	22

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

We do not have data on parental ethnicity for all the parents whose children attended the sample schools so we cannot compare survey responses to the whole parent population for these schools. What we have done is compare the ethnicity of the parents responding with national roll data for students' ethnicities, though there is not a one-to-one match (some families have more children than others). Table 57 shows that, on this comparison, while we have sufficient numbers to see if parents with different ethnicity have different experiences or views, we are likely to have received higher response rates for Pākehā/European parents than for those of other ethnicities.

TABLE 57 **Parent and whānau responses by ethnicity and national roll data for secondary students**

Ethnicity	2015 survey parents and whānau responding (n = 1,242) %	2015 National roll data for secondary students (n = 262,883) %
Pākehā/ European	68	54
Māori	10	21
Asian	8	11
Pasifika	4	10
Other	7	2

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 58 shows the qualifications of those who responded to this survey in 2015 and 2012. This year we had somewhat fewer without qualifications, and whose highest qualification was at the postgraduate level, and somewhat more whose highest qualification was at the bachelor degree level.

TABLE 58 Parent responses by highest qualification; 2012 and 2015

Qualification	2012 parents ( <i>n</i> = 1,477) %	2015 parents and whānau ( <i>n</i> = 1,242) %
None	8	5
5th, 6th form or higher school certificate	26	27
Technician's or advanced trade certificate or national diploma	11	8
Undergraduate or national diploma or certificate	16	12
Bachelor's degree	19	24
Postgraduate degree or diploma	17	13
Overseas qualification/Other	1	7

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

No recent comparable national figures are readily available, but a comparison of 2013 Census figures for mothers aged 30 to 64 years—albeit a much wider group than the parents of current secondary students—gives some indication of the over-representation of parents with high-level qualifications, and under-representation of those without any qualifications. The Census data show around 17% without a qualification, compared with 5% in this survey, and 17% with a Bachelor's degree as their highest qualification, compared with 24% in this survey.