

## 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

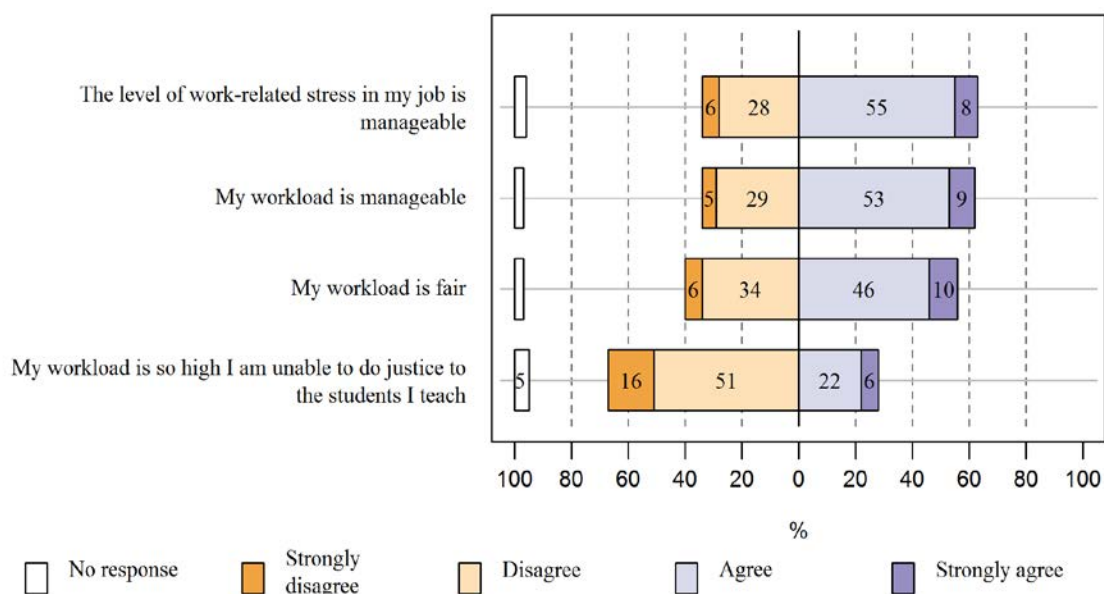
In 2015 there was evidence of teachers' morale levels returning to those reported in 2009, following a dip in 2012, when teachers were dealing with challenges involved in aligning NCEA with NZC. Sixty-nine percent of teachers rated their overall morale as a teacher as good or very good, up from 57% in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

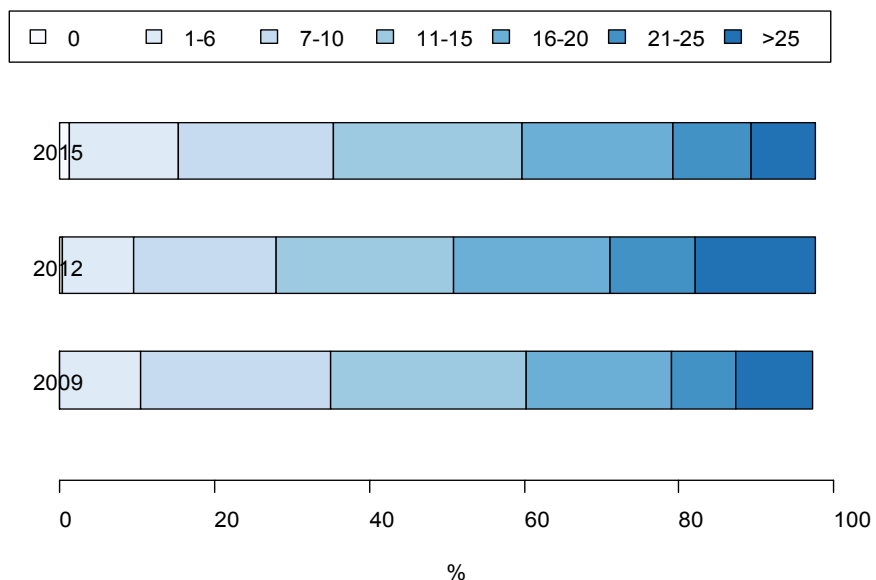
Eighteen percent of teachers were working more than 20 hours per week outside the times when students are required to be on site. Figure 28 summarises teachers' responses about these hours in 2009,

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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.

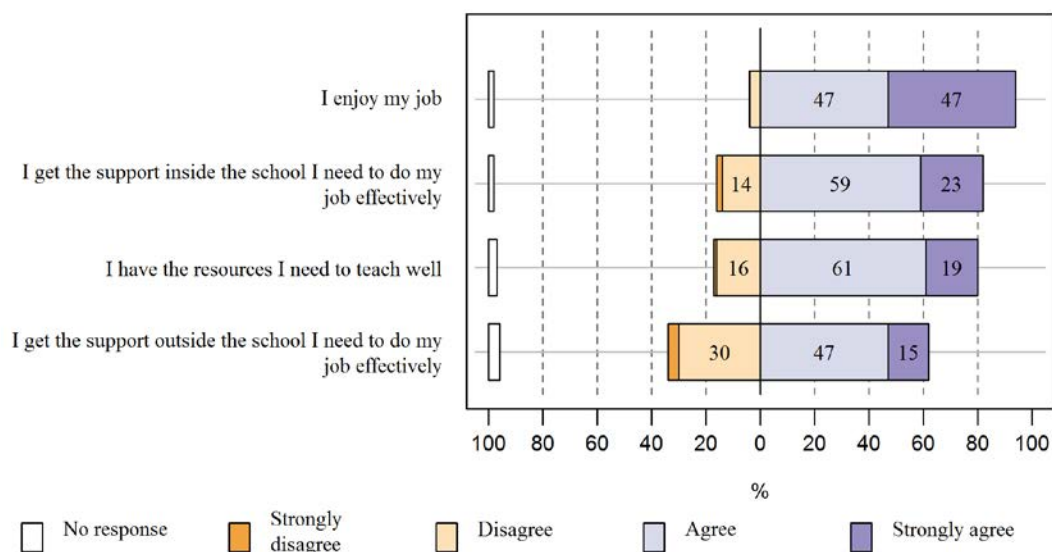
2012 and 2015. A slight improvement was evident in 2015; those working fewer than 6 hours increased, and those working more than 25 hours decreased slightly. As we saw for teacher morale and workload, the general pattern resembled that of 2009 rather than 2012.

**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)



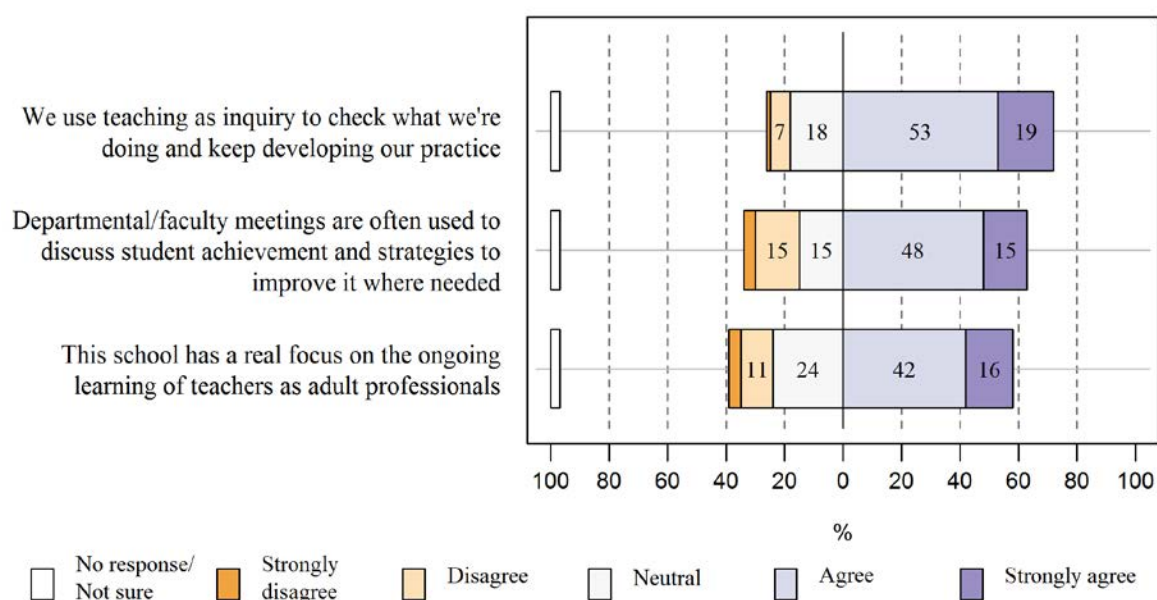
Table 18 shows a marked growth in opportunities for teachers to explore deeper ideas and theories since 2009 and 2012, and a rebound in the levels of some other aspects of professional learning in schools to 2009 levels, and even higher.

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)



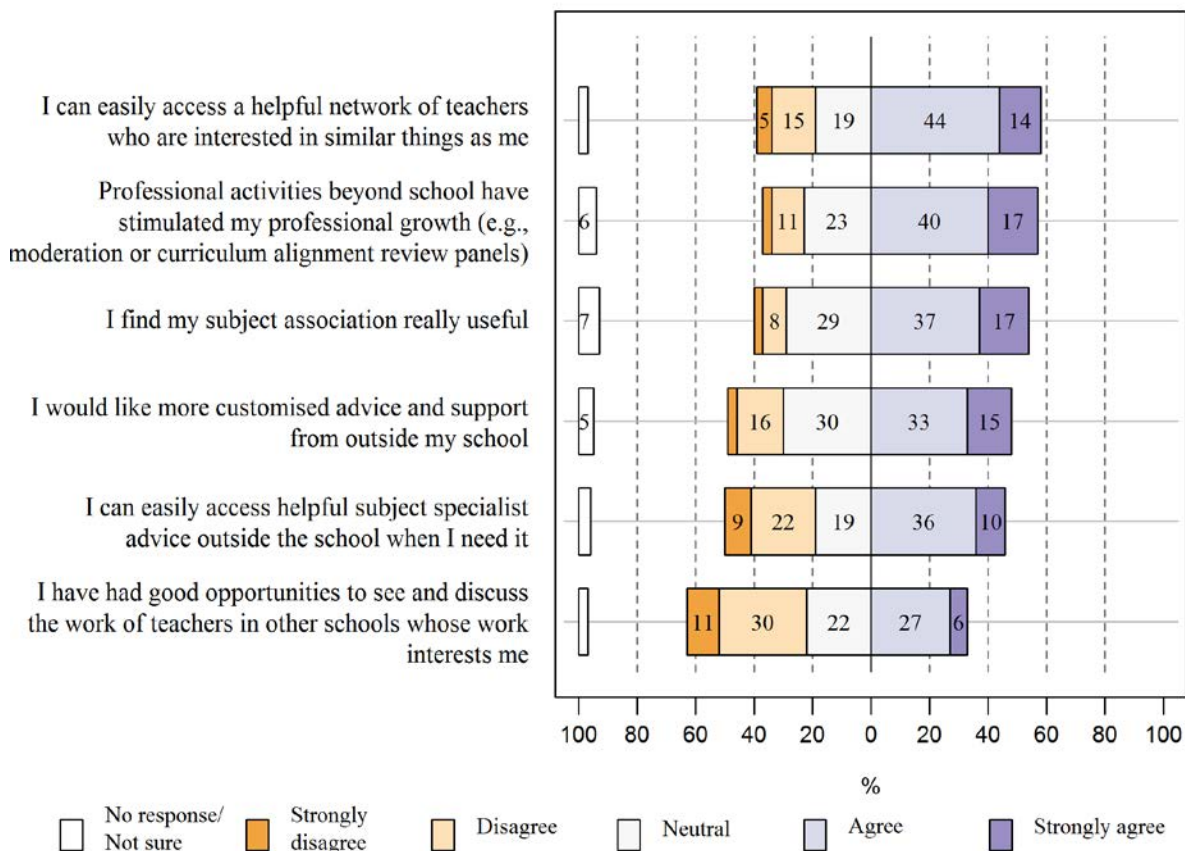
In 2015 more teachers indicated their departmental or faculty meetings were often used to discuss student achievement and strategies to improve this where needed (63%, up from 54% in 2012 and 47% in 2009). This steady increase is consistent with the national emphasis given the Better Public Services 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)

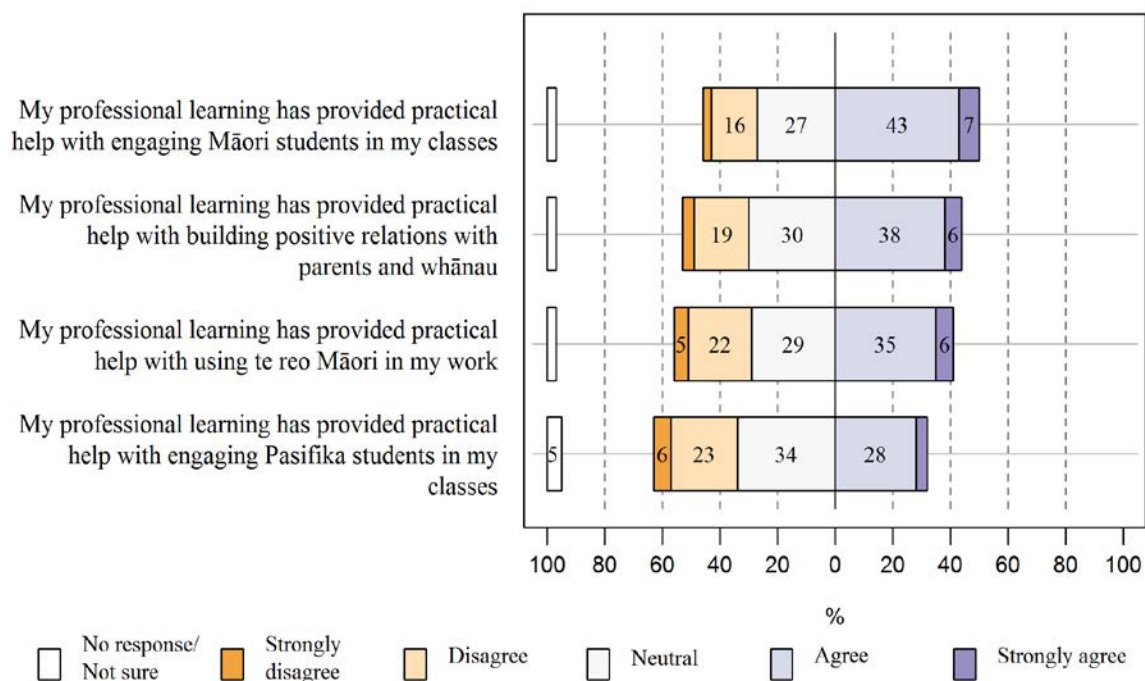


More teachers said they can easily access helpful subject specialist advice outside the school when they need it (46%, up from 37% in 2012), and fewer indicated they would like more customised advice and support from outside their school (48%, down from 63% in 2012, when the NCEA–NZC alignment was occurring). 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).

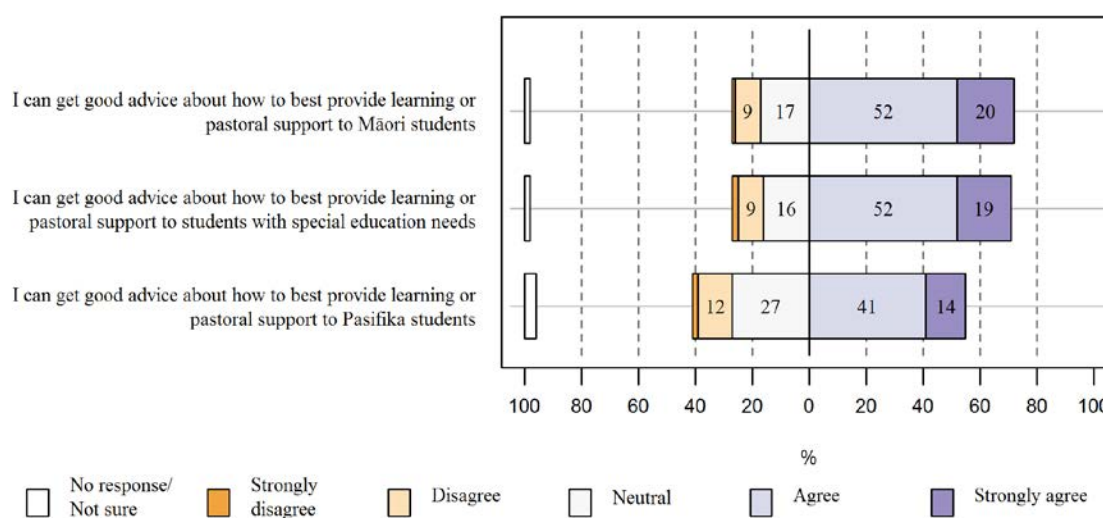
Teachers of Mathematics and Science were least likely to agree their professional learning had provided practical help with using te reo Māori in their work (35%), and teachers of Social Sciences and the Arts were most likely to have had this practical help (43%).

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)



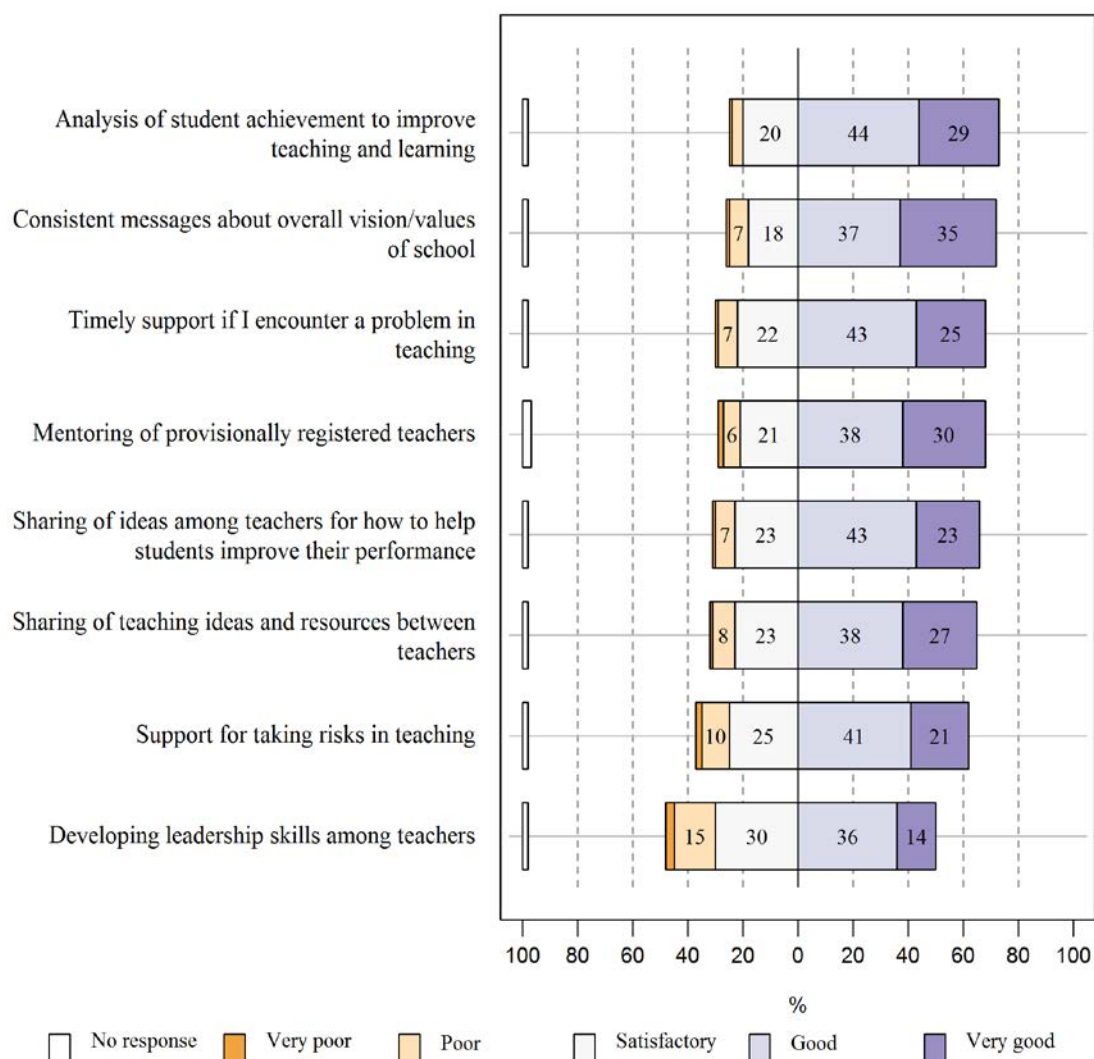
## School culture and ways of working

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)

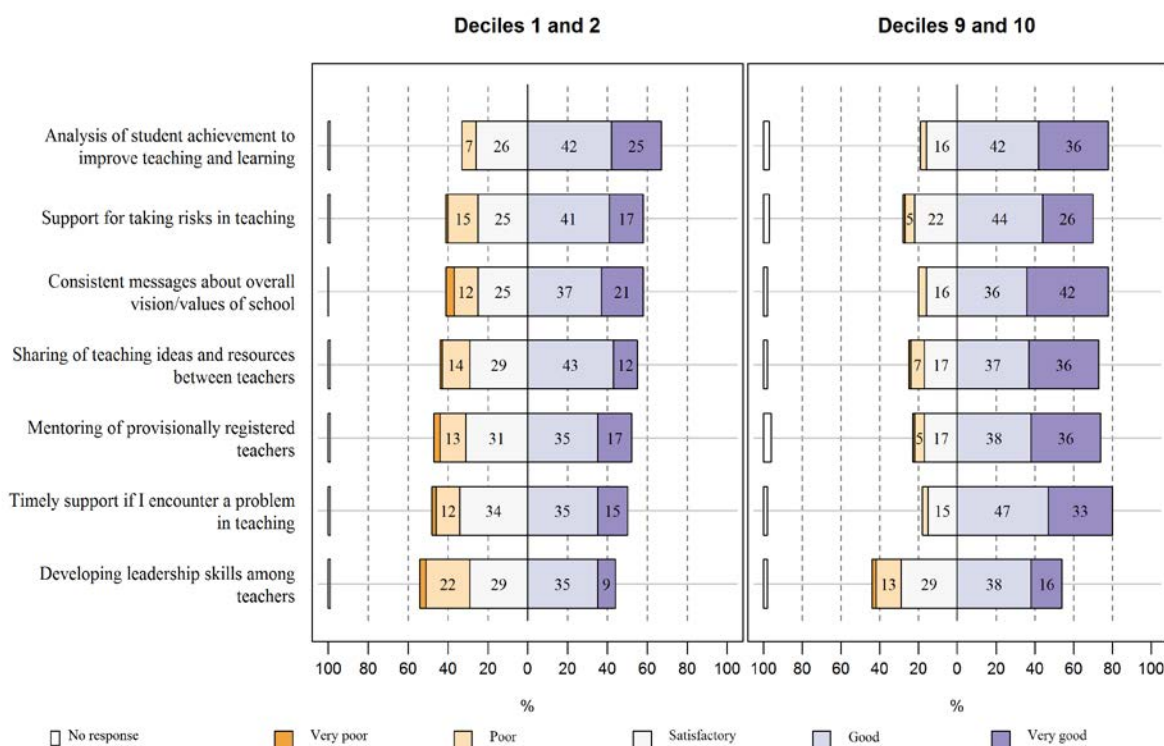


Teachers' views of the quality of the following aspects of school culture had improved since 2012:

- 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.

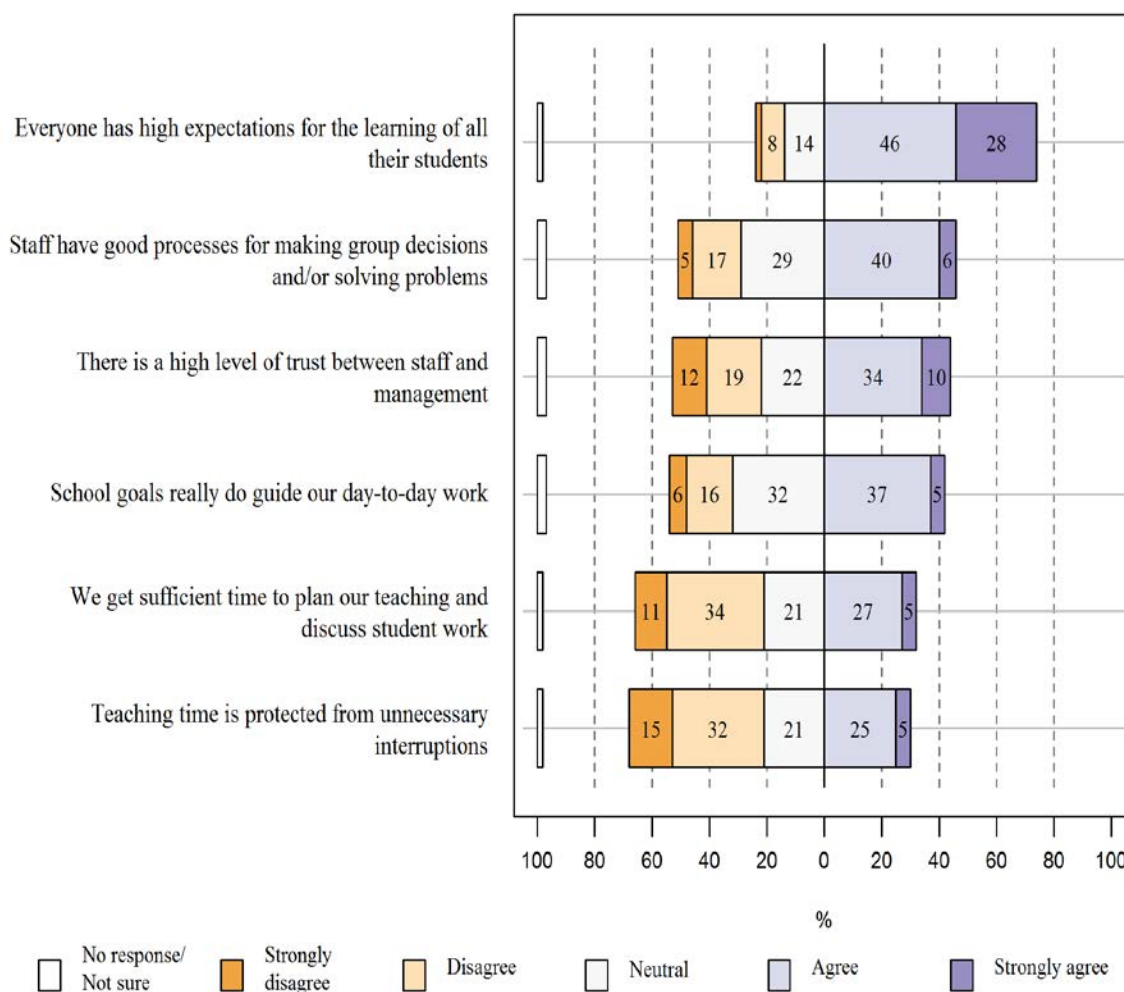
FIGURE 36 Decile-related differences in views of school culture; teachers in decile 1–2 and decile 9–10 schools (n = 150 and 358, respectively)



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.