
16. School resourcing, rolls, interactions with other schools, and system support

In this section, we first look at key aspects of schools' provision for learning: their government operational funding, staffing and school funding of additional teaching roles, school buildings, and the extent of competition between schools for students—and stability of school rolls—on which government funding and staffing rest.

Next we look at the support schools experience, including their interactions with other primary schools, early childhood services their students came from, and the intermediate or secondary schools they go onto.

Then we look at principal views of the advice they receive from government agencies and their own representative organisations, what they use from ERO's evaluative role at school and national levels, and schools' unmet needs for external expertise.

We finish this section with principal and trustee views of the major issues facing their schools, most often resource issues, but also challenges students bring, and goals for improving what the school can do for its students.

Operational funding continues to be a challenge

The Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce initial report noted that both costs and expectations of education continue to rise.⁵⁶ Operational funding continues to be a major issue for schools, identified by 67% of the principals and 56% of trustees responding to the national survey. In 2019, 12% of principals thought that their 2019 government funding for the school was enough to meet its needs, and 1% were unsure. This is much the same picture since 2010.

Answers about how the year was looking financially in 2019 were much the same as principals reported in the national survey 3 years earlier.

Fifty-six percent of the principals indicated that 2019 was looking much the same in financial terms as 2018; 13% said it was looking a bit better, and 3%, much better. Seventeen percent said the year was looking a bit worse than 2018, and 11%, a lot worse.

⁵⁶ Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (2018). *Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini*, p. 107. <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/assets/TSR/Tomorrows-Schools-Review-Report-13Dec2018.PDF>

Teaching staff numbers and finding teachers also challenge schools

Staffing numbers or class sizes were identified by 53% of principals and 40% of trustees as a major issue for their school. Sixty-eight percent of the principals did not consider the school's teaching staffing entitlement was enough to meet its needs. Sixty-three percent indicated that their school funded an additional teacher out of their operational grant and locally raised funds. The median number of full-time equivalent positions funded this way was one, with one school funding 13 such positions.

The main roles of school-funded additional teachers in 2019 were similar to those in 2016, with one exception:

- To teach a class: 39%
- Support students with learning support needs: 23%
- Provide literacy/numeracy support: 20% of these schools (lower than the 28% of schools in 2016)
- Support English language learners: 10%
- Principal relief: 8%
- Te reo Māori support: 8%
- Music / arts / kapa haka tuition: 7%
- Extension students / GATE: 3%
- IT/tech support: 2%
- Home-school partnership: 2%
- Supporting Pacific language/s: 2 %.

In 2018, teacher shortages hit the headlines, leading to Ministry action in 2019 to improve teacher supply. Sector leaders have also worked with the Ministry to develop an Education Workforce Strategy, work that is still under way.

When this survey was done in September 2019, 66% of the principals said they had difficulty finding suitable teachers for vacant positions at their school, a marked increase from 41% in 2016, and 18% in 2013.

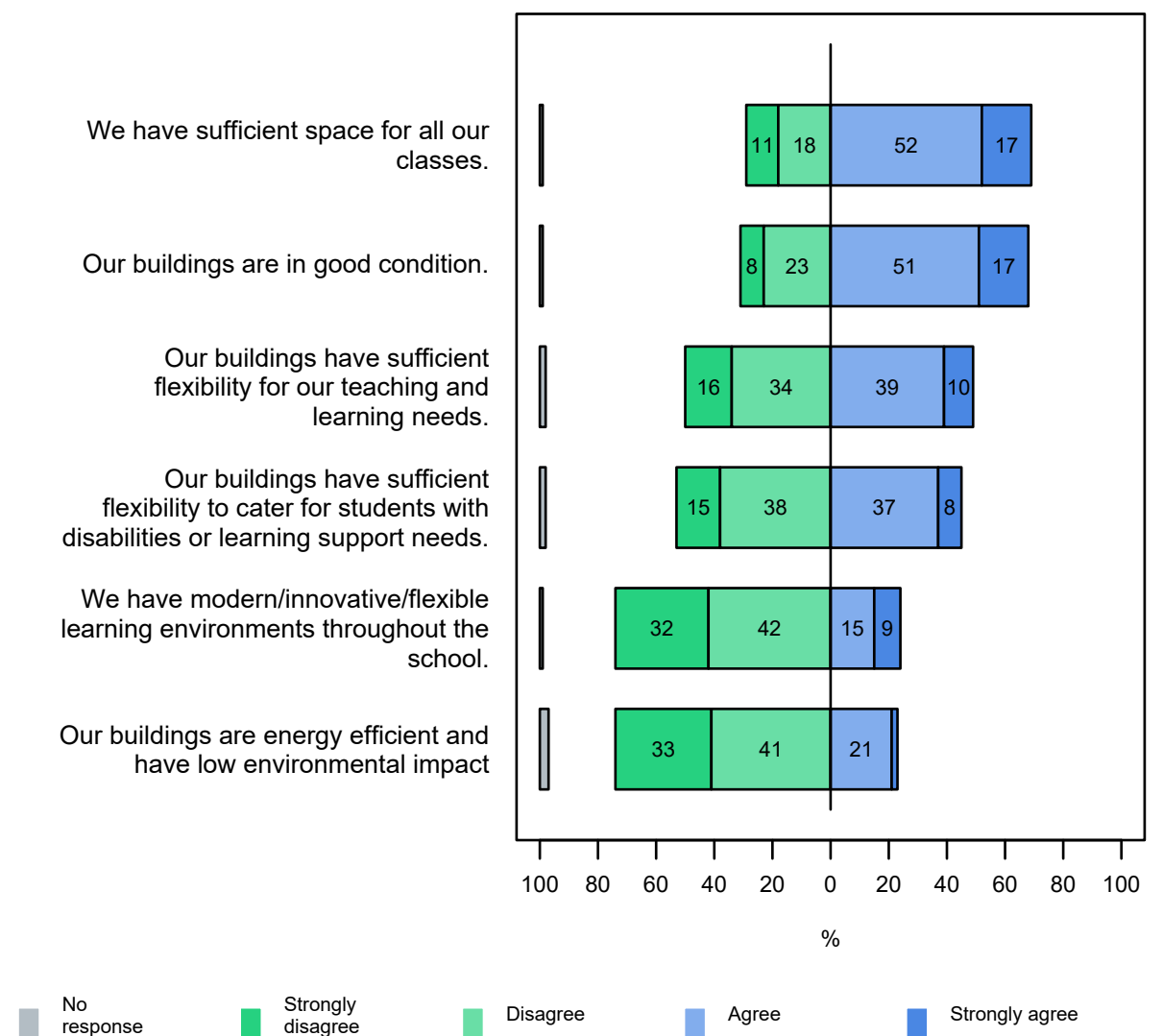
We asked about some positions in particular:

- 24% of all the principals responding had difficulty finding suitable senior or middle management leaders
- 21% had difficulty finding suitable teachers for students with learning support needs (other than Reading Recovery)
- 17% had difficulty finding suitable teachers for particular curriculum areas
- 12% had difficulty finding suitable teachers to provide Reading Recovery
- Between 17% and 24% of schools also had difficulty finding teachers of te reo Māori for different levels (this is reported fully in Section 3). These are much higher proportions than in 2016.

Two-thirds of schools have sufficient space for all classes and buildings in good condition

Around two-thirds of the principals thought their school buildings were in good condition, and that they had sufficient space for all their classes. They were less positive about the flexibility of their buildings. Around a quarter reported energy efficient buildings and flexible learning environments throughout the school. Figure 65 has the details.

FIGURE 65 Views of school buildings (Principals, n = 145)



Principals' reports of what they were doing in response to climate change included reducing energy consumption, waste, and emissions, but their comments indicated the need for more system-level support to enable this.⁵⁷

Student transience is a particular issue for decile 1 and 2 schools

The issues arising from student transience have been identified by principals as difficulty managing resources and staff, security of housing and family for children, poor attendance, behaviour or learning among transient children, and ensuring that they experienced continuity in their learning.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See Bolstad, R. (2020). *Climate change and sustainability in primary and intermediate schools: Findings from the 2019 NZCER national survey of English-medium school*. NZCER. <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/climate-change-and-sustainability-primary-and-intermediate-schools>

⁵⁸ Wylie, C. (2017). *School resources, relations with other schools, and support. Findings from the NZCER National Survey of Primary and Intermediate Schools 2016*. NZCER. pp 7–9. https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/National%20Survey_Resources_Nov17.pdf

In 2019, student transience was often an issue for 17% of the principals, and sometimes an issue for a further 46%. These proportions are much the same as in 2016 and 2013. It is an issue particularly for decile 1 and 2 schools: 42% of these principals said it was often an issue, followed by 27% of decile 3 and 4 school principals. It was not often an issue for any of the decile 9 and 10 school principals.

Direct competition for students affects over half of primary schools, but more schools have enrolment schemes, taking fewer out-of-zone students

Direct competition with other schools for students was reported by 56% of the principals, as it was by 63% in 2016. Three was the median number of schools with whom the principal felt their school was competing for students, with a range from one other school, to 11 other schools. This range is much the same as in 2016.

Competition for students was related to whether a school had spare places, but it was felt across the board. It was felt more by principals who had places for all students who applied, 72%, but it was also felt by 46% of those whose school rolls were full and 42% of the schools with an enrolment scheme.

In 2019, 61% of the schools had places for all the students who applied, not significantly different from the 67% in 2016. Forty-six percent had enrolment schemes, up from 38% in 2016, and 1% were thinking of having one. Enrolment schemes are related to school decile, with 21% of decile 1 and 2 school principals reporting they had an enrolment scheme, rising to 68% of decile 7 and 8 school principals, and 62% of decile 9 and 10 school principals.

Almost all of the schools with enrolment schemes took students from beyond their zone. In 2019, such students were not as high a proportion of the roll as they had been in 2016. Fifty-five percent of schools had up to 10% of their students from out of zone, compared with 37% in 2016. Conversely, fewer schools had more than 40% of their students from out of zone: 9% compared with 18% in 2016.

Interactions with other primary schools are common but often limited

We asked principals about their interaction with other schools. Table 32 shows high levels of sharing student sporting and to a lesser extent cultural events, and of professional learning. Sharing of student information when students change schools is still not universal. There is no evidence of an increase since 2016 for most of the activities we asked about in both years, even though many principals reported that their school belonged to a Kāhui Ako. However, as reported in the section on Kāhui Ako, there is more interaction related to students and learning among schools that belong to a Kāhui Ako.

Table 32 shows that around a third of the schools taking part in the 2019 national survey had ongoing interaction with other schools encompassing sharing and discussing their work, and working together to achieve satisfactory outcomes for individual students.

Schools' interaction with other schools ranged from 4% that had one or two kinds of interaction only, to 24% that had 10 or more different kinds of interaction with other schools. Just over 40% of the principals reported five to seven different kinds of interaction with other schools.

There was less reporting by decile 1–2 school principals of sharing or discussing student achievement data with other schools (21%), sharing information on an individual student moving schools (63%), or sharing/reflecting on leadership practice at the principal level (67%).

TABLE 32 Schools' interactions with other primary and intermediate schools

	2013 Principals (n = 172) %	2016 Principals (n = 200) %	2019 Principals (n = 145) %
Share sporting events	*	98	92
Share individual student information if they move to another school	*	*	82
Share and reflect on leadership practice at the principal level	*	80	81
Share PLD	72	73	77
Visit other schools to learn from each other	43	76	75
Share cultural events	*	79	68
Share challenges and approaches around getting change in pedagogy	*	49	51
Share and discuss each school's student achievement data [^]	*	41*	43
Share and discuss each school's student wellbeing data	*	*	31
Have regular meetings of schools as a group with social agencies	29	25	31
Work together to place students who are having difficulty in one school into another school	14	23	30
Share and discuss each school's learning support data	*	*	29
Share and discuss our student engagement data [#]	*	20	26
Work with other local schools to reduce truancy	9	17	15

*= Not asked.

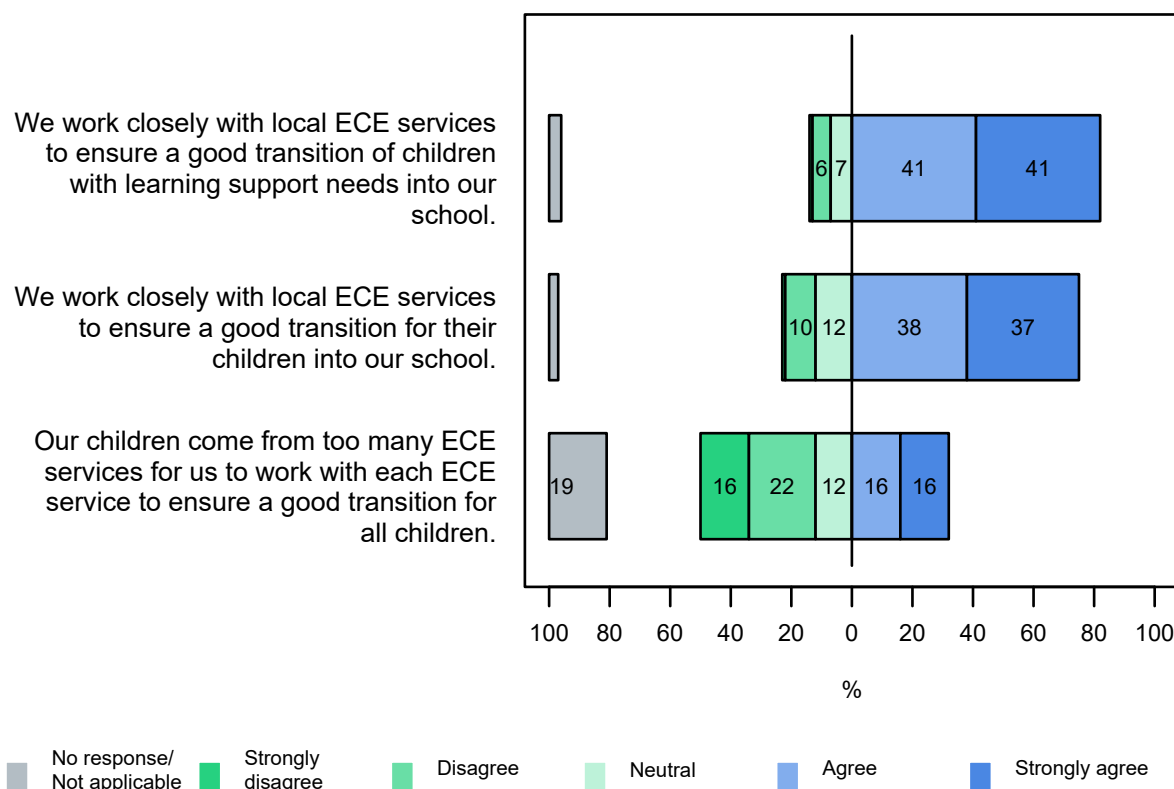
[^] In 2016, this question was phrased "discuss school achievement data"

[#] In 2016, this question was phrased "discuss our student engagement data"

Most schools work with early childhood education services to support their students' transition

Most primary school principals reported that they worked closely with local ECE services to ensure a good transition, and somewhat more did so for students with learning support needs. But around a third noted that their students came from too many ECE services for them to be able to work with each one of these services. Figure 66 has the details.

FIGURE 66 Schools' work with ECE services to support transition to school (Principals, n = 145)

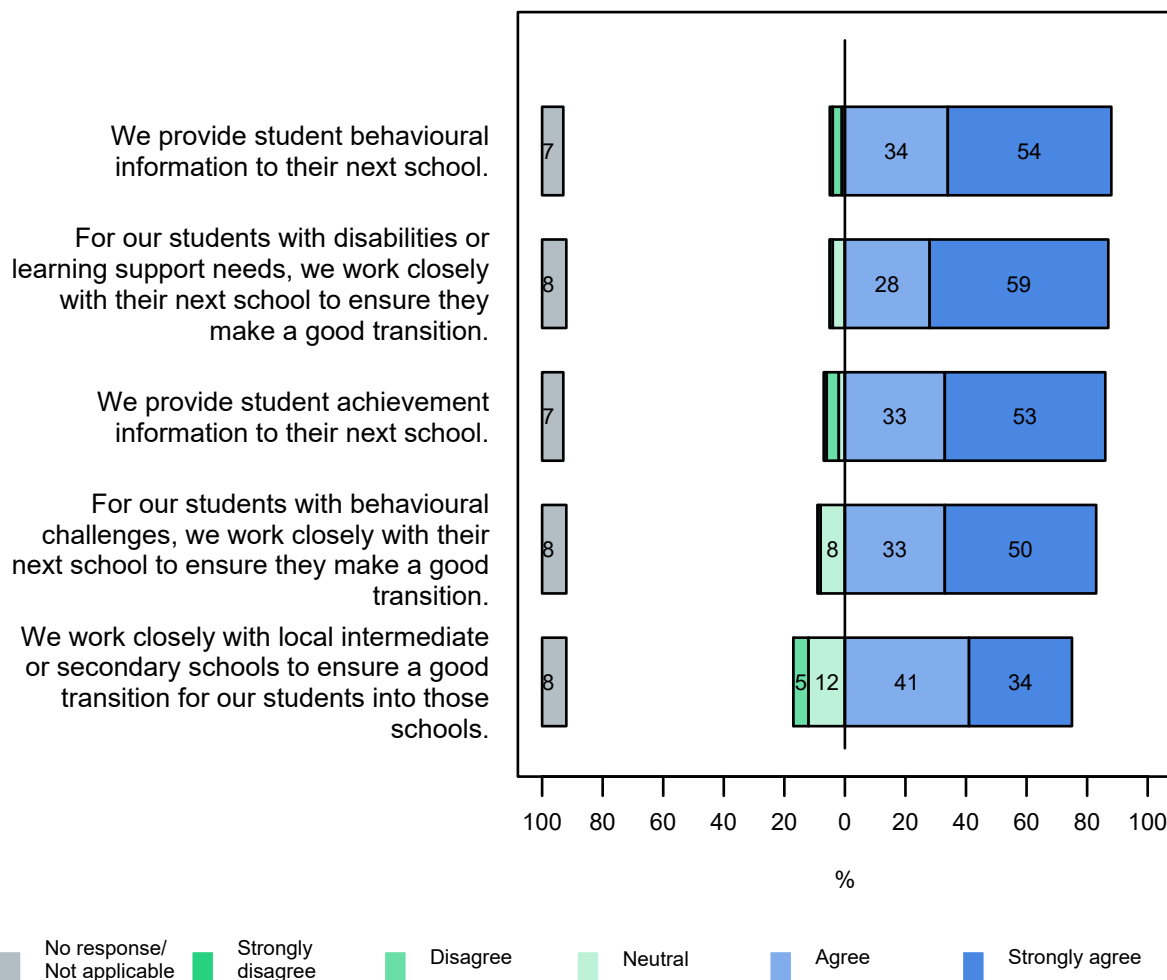


Supporting the transition of students from Kōhanga Reo and other Māori immersion services is described in Section 3. Transition from Pacific language nests is reported in Section 4.

Most schools share information about students to support transition from primary schools

Most principals also reported working closely with local intermediate or secondary schools to ensure a good transition for their students into those schools. Even more provided students' next schools with student achievement and behavioural information—though not all. Perhaps they did not know where students had gone. Almost all worked closely with the next school for students with disabilities or learning support needs, or behavioural challenges. Figure 67 shows that there was a higher level of strong agreement with the items about sharing individual information than for general work with the next schooling level.

FIGURE 67 Primary schools' work with the next schooling level to support student transition (Principals, n = 145)



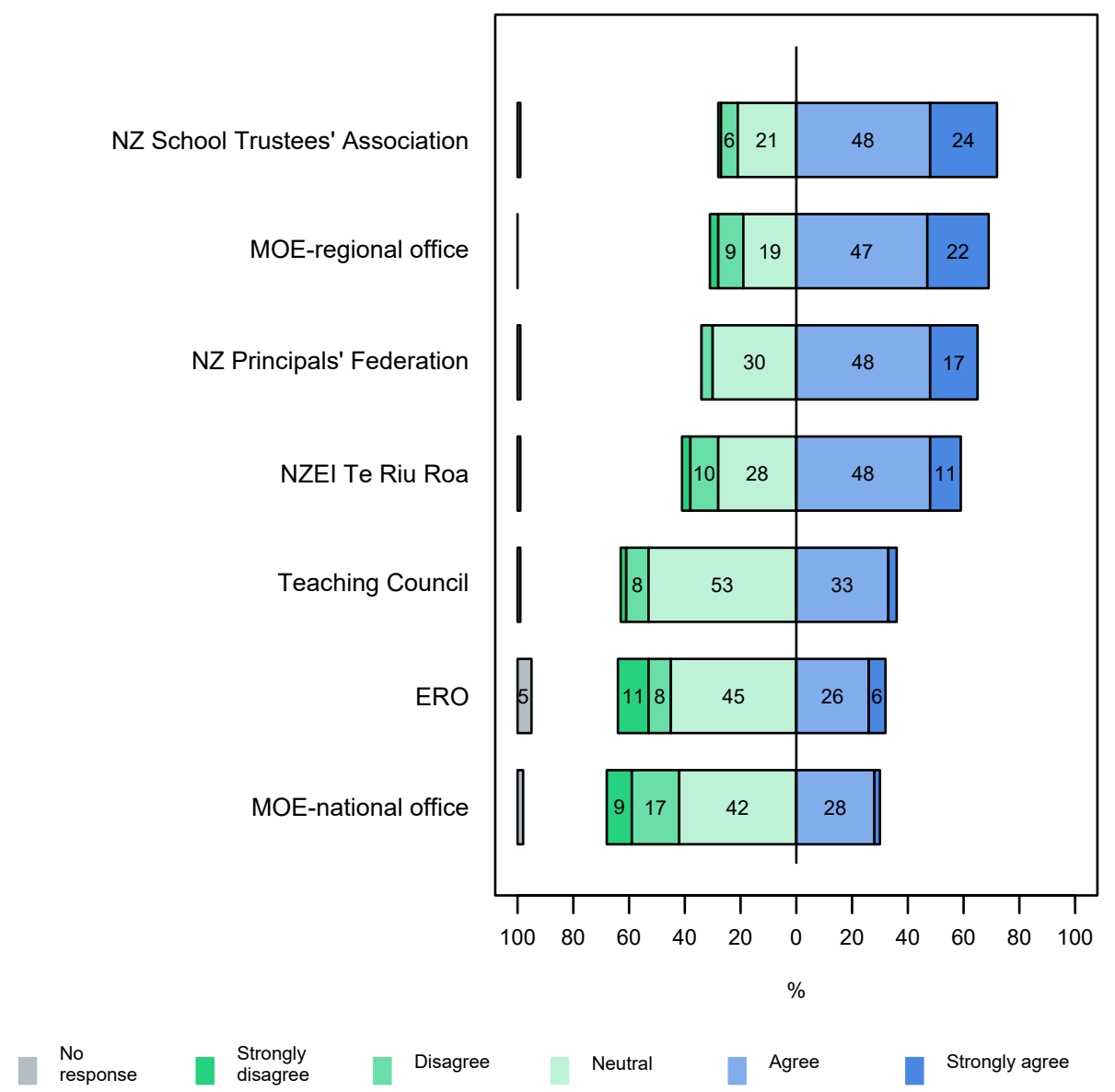
Support for the transition of the relatively few students moving on from rumaki or bilingual units, or who have studied te reo Māori as a subject is reported in Section 3.

Principals are largely positive about national organisations' advice

Figure 68 shows principals' views on whether they had helpful advice in 2019 from government education agencies, NZSTA—which is contracted to provide advice to boards and principals as the school manager—and their own professional organisations. Positive views outweighed negative views for all the organisations. Neutral views are likely to indicate mixed experiences or a lack of contact in 2019; quite a few principals had neutral views, particularly about the Teaching Council, ERO, and the national office of the Ministry of Education.

Principals were more likely to have positive views of the organisations they have approached for information, such as NZSTA or the Ministry of Education regional office, rather than organisations they may have approached for a decision about resources (the national office of the Ministry of Education), or that can make a decision that could affect their standing (ERO).

FIGURE 68 Principals' views of the helpfulness of advice⁵⁹ (n = 145)

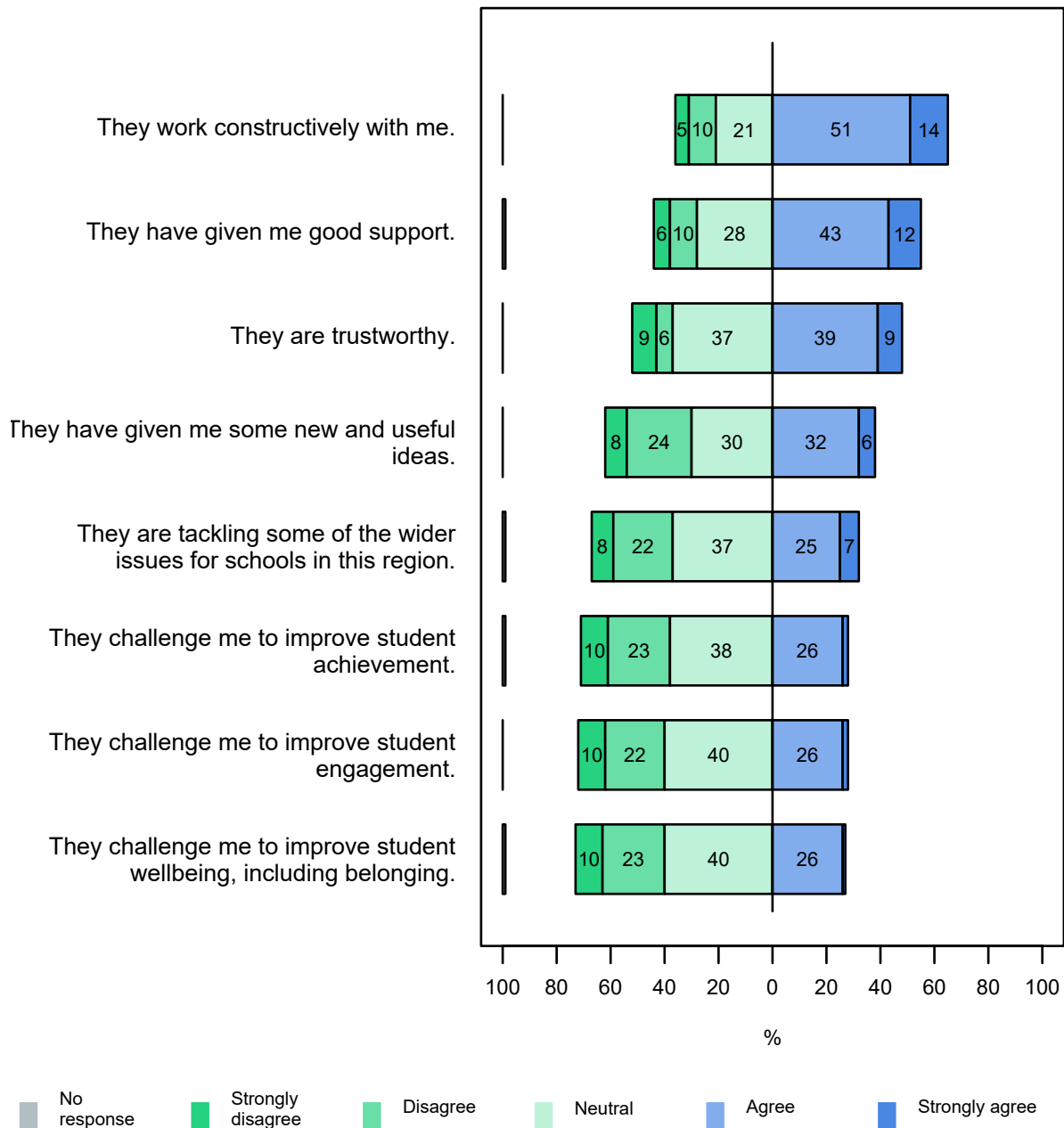


Principals' views of the government agencies and professional organisations were much the same as they expressed in 2016 in relation to their Ministry of Education regional office, and NZSTA, NZPF, and NZEI Te Riu Roa. Fewer principals in 2019 disagreed that the Teaching Council had provided them with helpful advice than in 2016, when the Teaching Council was the Education Council (10% in 2019, 22% in 2016). More principals in 2019 disagreed that the national office of the Ministry of Education had provided them with helpful advice (26% in 2019, 16% in 2016). Fewer principals agreed that ERO had provided them with helpful advice (32% in 2019, 43% in 2016).

We asked further questions about principal experiences with their regional Ministry of Education office (see Figure 69). Many thought that this office had worked constructively with them, and around half felt this office had given them good support and was trustworthy. Neutral views may indicate that principals had mixed views or little contact with their regional office.

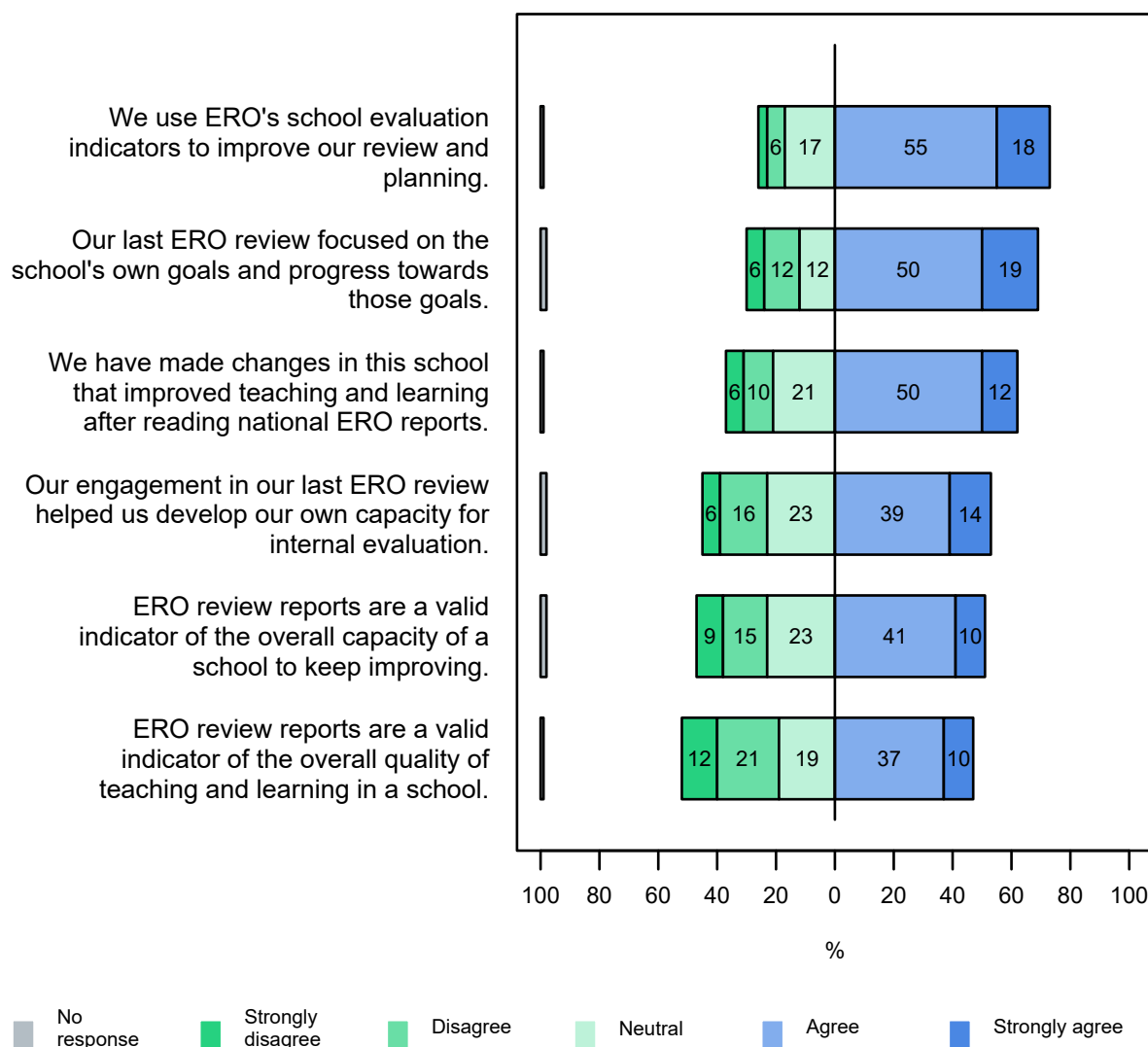
⁵⁹ MOE = Ministry of Education, ERO = Education Review Office, NZSTA = NZ School Trustees' Association

FIGURE 69 Principals' views of their regional Ministry of Education office (n = 145)



How do principals see their experiences with ERO, and what use do they make of its school and national evaluations to improve what they do? Figure 70 shows that more principals found value in ERO review reports than thought ERO review reports were valid indicators of a school's quality, or agree that ERO reviews develop school capacity for self-evaluation. The picture here was much the same in 2016.

FIGURE 70 Principals' views of ERO (n = 145)



There continue to be unmet school needs for external expertise

We asked principals about their access to external expertise to support a range of current and longstanding aspects of schools' work. Table 33 gives the overall picture of the proportions who said they needed expertise but could not readily access it, with the figures for 2016 included for items also asked then.⁶⁰ Expertise to work with students with mental health needs tops the list, as it did in 2016. A significant minority of schools also continued to need expertise but could not readily find it to improve their Māori and Pacific students' learning, and differentiate teaching for their students with learning support needs. Digital technology curriculum changes also need more support. Other core areas of schools' work, such as using data and inquiry, or embedding key competencies, have only small proportions unable to access external expertise, or feeling that the school did not need it.

⁶⁰ Principals could select one of three answers: 'not needed', 'needed and can readily access', and 'needed, but can't readily access'. All the items that had 22% or fewer principals identifying it as an area of needed expertise they could not readily access had around half of the principals saying it was an area they needed external expertise in, which they could readily access.

TABLE 33 External expertise needed but not readily accessed by schools

Aspect	2016 Principals (n = 200)	2019 Principals (n = 145)
Working with students with mental health needs	46	59
Engaging with whānau, hapu, and iwi	*	46
Implementing reliable strategies to support Māori student learning	37	41
Implementing the revised digital technologies content in the Technology learning area	*	32
Differentiating teaching for students with disabilities or learning support needs	24	30
Implementing reliable strategies to support Pacific student learning	21	29
Engaging with Pacific families	*	26
Selecting effective external advice/support for the school's professional learning	29	22
Supporting or improving student wellbeing	14	19
Engaging with families about providing for students with disabilities or learning support needs	*	16
Promoting positive student behaviour	15	6
Reporting on progress for students with learning support needs	12	8
Embedding key competencies into all learning areas	12	7
Analysing student achievement data	9	6
Using student and school data in ways that improve teaching and learning	19	6
Using teacher inquiry to improve learning	11	3

Resources and support are the major issues school leaders and trustees identify

We asked principals and trustees to identify the major issues facing their school from a set of items, many of which we have asked about in the national surveys since 2010.

Table 34 shows the trends in what principals identified as the major issues facing their school. These issues are not so much the core work of schools—student achievement—but about the human, digital, and physical resources that are needed to enable that work.

The first thing to notice about the major issues identified by principals as ones facing their school are the marked increases in principals' sense of increased expectations of what schools can do, coupled with resourcing difficulties that have grown markedly: in relation to teacher supply, digital technology, class sizes, and property. Funding in general has been a perennial major issue.

The second thing to notice is the challenge principals face in getting support for students with mental health or additional wellbeing needs: testament in some respects to our growing awareness of needs in this area. There is also an increase since 2013 in the proportion of principals finding student behaviour a major issue in their school. Bullying was less identified as a major issue, by 15% of principals.

In 2019, principals were also more aware of the value of partnerships with iwi and hapū, and the challenges of forging these.

TABLE 34 Major issues facing principals' schools

Major issue	2010 (n = 207) %	2013 (n = 180) %	2016 (n = 200) %	2019 (n = 145) %
Too much is being asked of schools	*	42	53	72
Funding	66	66	48	67
Cost of purchasing, maintaining, and replacing digital devices & infrastructure ⁶¹	*	*	*	64
Support for students with mental health or additional wellbeing needs	*	*	*	63
Recruiting quality teachers ⁶²	22	15	(31)	56
Property maintenance or development	30	38	48	55
Staffing levels / Class sizes	34	18	38	53
Partnership with iwi and hapū	*	*	30	46
Retaining quality teachers	27	25	(31)	39
Good quality professional learning and development	*	*	30	37
Achievement of students with learning support needs ⁶³	*	19	39	34
Parent and whānau engagement	*	*	*	28
Student behaviour ⁶⁴	12	12	21	28
Using modern/innovative learning environments effectively	*	*	*	27
Student achievement	33	35	31	26
Māori student achievement	18	29	34	25
Pacific student achievement	8	13	19	16
Student bullying, including cyber bullying	*	*	*	15
Student engagement	*	*	*	15
Responding to cultural diversity	6	14	9	12

* = Not asked.

61 In 2016, the equivalent item was "Maintenance/replacement of digital technology," identified by 52% of principals as a major issue for their school.

62 In the 2016 national survey, we amalgamated items about teacher supply, and asked about "attracting or recruiting good teachers": 31% of principals identified this as a major issue for their school.

63 In 2016, this item referred to students with additional education needs, the terminology then in use for this group of students.

64 In 2010 the item was "student behaviour/discipline"; in 2013 "improving student behaviour".

Decile 7–10 school principals were least likely to identify recruiting quality teachers, student behaviour, parent and whanau engagement, or student bullying as major issues for their school. Decile 1–2 school principals had more principals identifying recruiting quality teachers as a major issue (79%), Māori student achievement (47%), and student bullying (38%).

Table 35 shows the trends in what trustees identify as the major issues facing their school. Of note is the increase in the proportion of trustees who identified funding as a major issue facing their school, showing a similar pattern as principals.

The proportion of trustees identifying staffing levels / class sizes as a major issue shows little change from 2016 at 40%, but it remained considerably higher than the 20% who selected it in 2013. Recruiting quality teachers was identified as an issue by 33% of the trustees, considerably increased from 8% in 2013 and 15% in 2016 (when it was combined with retention in the item “attracting and/or keeping good teachers”).

A smaller proportion of trustees identified student achievement as a major issue facing their school (12% down from 21% in 2016 and 27% in 2013).

TABLE 35 Trustees' views of major issues facing their school

Major issue	2010 (n = 257) %	2013 (n = 277) %	2016 (n = 126) %	2019 (n = 126) %
Funding	65	55	34	56
Staffing levels/class sizes	12	20	36	40
Parent/whānau engagement (in 2013: Increasing parent support for learning)	24	34	25	35
Property maintenance or development	29	43	43	34
Recruiting quality teachers	10	8	*	33
Cost of purchasing, maintaining, and replacing digital devices/ infrastructure	*	*	19	29
Support for students with mental health or additional wellbeing needs	*	*	*	26
Achievement of students with learning support needs	*	18	21	25
Māori student achievement	14	30	25	23
Retaining quality teachers	24	16	*	21
Partnerships with iwi and hāpu	*	*	13	18
Too much being asked of schools	*	15	17	18
Student behaviour (2010: student behaviour/discipline)	8	11	14	15
Student achievement	25	27	21	12
Responding to cultural diversity	4	10	7	11
Pacific student achievement	2	16	14	10
Student bullying (2013: Decreasing bullying)	*	7	*	10
Using modern/innovative learning environments effectively	*	*	*	10
Good quality PLD (2013: Insufficient support for professional learning)	10	9	7	8
Student engagement (previously Motivating and engaging students)	2	11	5	6

* Not asked in that year

Few of these major issues identified by trustees were associated with school decile. Trustees from decile 3–4 schools were more likely than other trustees to report that Māori student achievement and Pacific student achievement were major issues facing their school. Only trustees from decile 1–4 schools reported that student engagement was a major issue.

Summary

There were few surprises in the views reported in this section. Squaring available resources with growing expectations has long been an issue for schools. Gains are unlikely to be made here unless there is more government funding and active support, and concerted work to make more of the time and money available.

In 2019 school rolls were somewhat fuller, more schools had zones, and were taking fewer out-of-zone students. Interaction between schools was common, particularly sharing sporting events, professional learning and development, visiting other schools to learn from them, or talking with fellow principals. Around a third of the schools taking part in the 2019 national survey have ongoing interaction with other schools encompassing sharing and discussing their work, and working together to achieve satisfactory outcomes for individual students.

Principal views of the helpfulness of the advice they receive from government organisations and their own representative organisations are related to the role they play, with more positive views of those that give them advice than those whose decisions affect their school. Quite a few principals had neutral views, suggesting that they may have had no contact or mixed experiences with these organisations.

Views had not changed much from 2016, with some improvement evident in relation to the (now) Teaching Council, the national office of the Ministry of Education, and somewhat less satisfaction in relation to ERO. However, many principals continued to find value in ERO school and national reports. Around half thought that ERO reviews were a valid indicator of overall school quality. Most thought their regional Ministry of Education office worked constructively with them, and half thought it had given their school good support, and was trustworthy.

Schools continued to have unmet needs for external expertise that they cannot readily access; this is most evident for particular groups of students, and for engaging with whānau, hapū and iwi, and Pacific families. Schools' growing awareness of the need to partner with iwi and hapū was also evident in almost half the principals identifying this as a major issue for their school.

Resources and support for schools dominate principal and trustee reports of the major issues facing their schools, with principals feeling increasingly that too much is being asked of schools.