NZCER
Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa

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Main findings from the NZCER national survey

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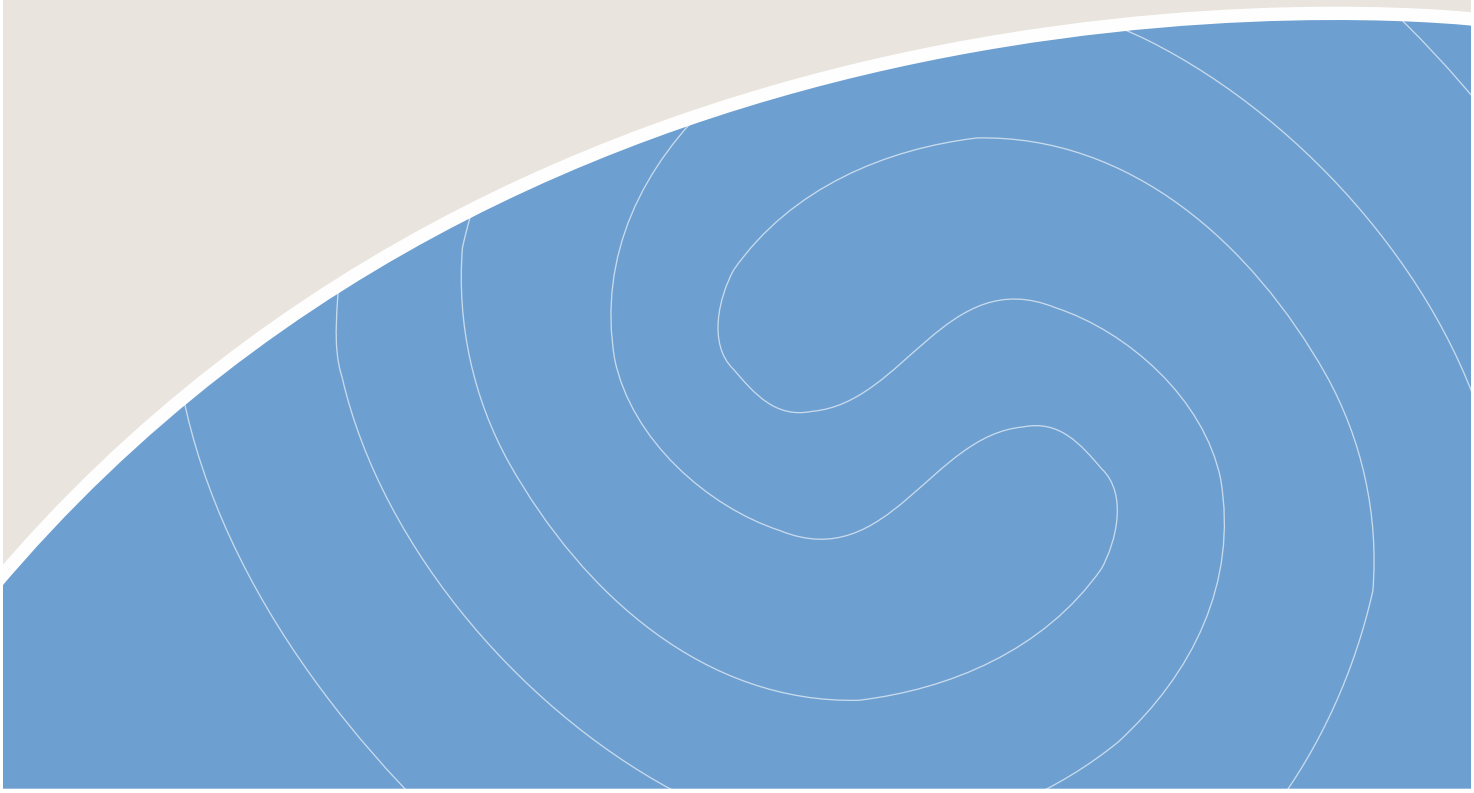

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The NZCER surveys draw on a range of expertise within NZCER. Rachael Kearns ensured the smooth running of the survey. Edith Hodgen and Rachel Dingle undertook the statistical management and analysis of the data. Christine Williams formatted the questionnaires and this report. John Huria edited this overview report, and Rose Hipkins and Robyn Baker gave feedback on the draft report which enabled its improvement.

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1. Introduction

This report provides the main findings from NZCER's latest national survey of secondary schools, which took place in July and August 2012. These surveys have taken place every 3 years since 2003. They provide a comprehensive picture of how things are in our secondary schools, and the impact of policy and policy changes. The 2012 survey predated the difficulties with Novopay, the new payment system for school staff, which have preoccupied many schools in recent months.

Questionnaires went to all principals of New Zealand's 322 state and state-integrated secondary schools, and to the board chair and one other trustee on the school board. All teachers on the PPTA's email database of full and part-time teachers were surveyed via a web-based questionnaire. Parents were surveyed at a representative sub-sample of 28 secondary schools, using a random allocation of 1 in 5 parents, with schools taking part receiving the results for their own school as well as a comparison with the national picture.

We received responses from 177 principals (55 percent of all secondary school principals), from 290 trustees (45 percent of the trustees surveyed), 1,266 teachers (10 percent of those on the PPTA email database), and 1,477 parents (26 percent of those surveyed). Appendix 1 shows that there is some under-representation among principal and trustee responses of decile 1–2 schools, and those with fewer than 800 students. Overall, the responses provide a reasonable national picture, with similar patterns in terms of school characteristics as previous NZCER national surveys. However, somewhat more state-integrated schools were included in the parent sample in 2012 than in 2009, and we had higher responses from parents in high-decile schools.

Comparisons between 2009 and 2012 responses are reported where there are differences indicating a change over time. Also reported are statistically significant differences in

responses related to school socioeconomic decile—the school characteristic most likely to be associated with different experiences—and in relation to parental ethnicity, because of the policy emphasis on better meeting the needs of Māori and Pasifika students and their whānau and families.

Some key findings

- Schools' government funding remains a key issue for schools, with two-thirds reporting a worse financial year in 2012 than in 2011. A quarter of the principals have dealt with deficits over the last 3 years.
- Competition between schools for students is more the norm than exception. To encourage enrolments, some schools are spending more on marketing and property than they would like. NCEA league tables in the media are thought to impact on school rolls for around half the secondary schools, with gains for high-decile schools.
- Though most principals are interested in working relations with other schools, only half report some sharing of resources, professional development and information about individual students.
- Principal views of the quality of their interaction with the Ministry of Education have slipped since 2009. Recent changes to Ministry roles and school support have yet to show benefits for most schools. Access to the external expertise they need to keep developing in national priority areas is uneven. Many secondary teachers have limited access to curriculum expertise beyond their own school; NZQA moderation and standards alignment work have provided most of their recent national professional development.
- The New Zealand Curriculum, which became mandatory in 2010, appears to have led to some positive changes in school and classroom practices that are likely to improve student engagement and learning opportunities.
- NCEA is now a decade old. Most views are positive, but NCEA workload is more of an issue now than in 2009, and most think assessment is driving the curriculum, even in Years 9 and 10. Parents' confidence that they understand NCEA is still not high.
- Thirty-nine percent of principals think their school will reach the new national target of 85 percent of 18 year olds having NCEA Level 2 or its equivalent by 2017. Most of the rest say their schools are making changes all the time in their efforts to increase the number of students who gain this qualification. This interest in doing what they can to improve student achievement points to the need to make sure that schools have the knowledge they need to make effective changes.
- While teachers see many benefits in student ICT use, it occurs sometimes rather than often. ICT use is curtailed by slow or unreliable equipment and Internet access, and lack of support.
- Principal and teacher morale has slipped since 2009. While most secondary principals and teachers enjoy their jobs, workloads are high, with less sense of support.

- Decile 1–2 schools stand out as facing issues related to funding, student achievement, behaviour, and motivation, and keeping and attracting good teachers.
- Boards of trustees are working more with the Ministry of Education, but trustee views are mixed about their experiences. Boards continue to spend most of their time on financial management, strategic planning and property. Most have also consulted with their school community over the last year.
- While there has been some tightening of school accountability to the Ministry of Education since 2009, few see that a key aspect of boards' role is to act as government agents. Most parents do not gain information about their child's school or make their choice of school through documents of school accountability, such as school annual reports or ERO reviews.
- The degree of choice in the system appears to be sufficient for the majority of families; all but 9 percent said the school their child attended was their first choice. In some cases, this response was because the child wanted to attend a different school than the one parents wanted.
- Parents are largely positive about their child's experience at secondary school, and slightly more so than in 2009. Views on the quality of information they receive are also more positive in 2012.

Main findings from each of the four questionnaires are reported below, starting with the principals, and moving on to teachers, trustees and parents. For some topics, such as NCEA, I have brought together in one section perspectives from across different groups. Full frequency tables for all the questions are available on request.

2. Principal perspectives

Principals were asked about their school's operations, support for the school and their own role as school leaders, their relations with other schools, and, as with the other three groups surveyed, the major issues facing their school.

Funding and staffing

Only 5 percent of secondary principals think that their school's government funding for 2012 has been enough to meet the school's needs, about the same proportion as in 2009. Steering their school back from a deficit was listed by 24 percent of principals as one of their main achievements over the last 3 years.

Two-thirds of the principals report that their school's financial situation was worse in 2012 than 2011. Several factors contributed to this situation.

- Fixed costs had risen (48 percent, increased from 39 percent who said this in 2009 in relation to changes since 2008).
- The introduction of allocating roll-based operational funding to schools each quarter using actual roll numbers at that time, rather than March rolls, was also having an impact, with 47 percent saying that this had made 2012 worse in financial terms. This shift in funding method affected low-decile schools most.
- The school had less income than expected (34 percent, increased from 28 percent in 2009).
- Voluntary school fees/donations payment levels had dropped (25 percent, much the same as in 2009).
- They had fewer international fee-paying students (24 percent).

- They had an unexpected roll decrease (20 percent).

Decile 9–10 schools have the most stable financial situation, with 36 percent of principals of these schools reporting no change since 2011, compared with 10 percent of decile 1–2 principals.

Rises in fixed costs pose a greater challenge for those whose rolls drop unexpectedly. Eighty percent of the principals whose schools were worse off financially in 2012 because of unexpected roll decreases also said their costs had risen. This would erode some of their ability to provide for the students in their schools.

Thirty percent of secondary schools were doing better financially in 2012 than in 2011, but for 18 percent, it was because they had cut their spending. Schools that had been able to increase their income had done so by increasing their locally raised funds (14 percent), or attracting more international fee-paying students (11 percent).

Most principals also think their teaching staffing entitlement is not enough (74 percent), a slightly lower proportion than in 2009 (80 percent). Most schools augment their teaching staff entitlement by using their locally raised funds (parent donations, fees from international students, fundraising and the like) to hire additional teachers. Twenty-three percent of secondary schools are now hiring four or more additional teachers, up from 19 percent in 2009. High-decile schools hire more additional teachers (a median of 5 compared with 1.5 in other schools); this may also reflect their larger average roll.

The continuing economic downturn appears to have made it somewhat easier to find suitable teachers, with a drop of almost half since 2009 in the proportion of schools that find it difficult to do so (7 percent; in 2009, it was 12 percent). However, 20 percent of decile 1–2 schools continue to have general difficulty finding suitable teachers.

It's also become easier to fill middle-management vacancies. But 68 percent of schools continue to have difficulty filling vacancies in some curriculum areas for teaching and teaching-management roles.

Variation in school situations and relations between schools

Around a third of secondary schools are oversubscribed: they cannot take all the students who apply. Integrated and special-character schools are more likely not to have places for all students applying (54 percent and 75 percent respectively).

High-decile schools are also more likely to be oversubscribed (64 percent), as are schools with enrolment schemes (61 percent). These two categories overlap: 70 percent of high-decile secondary schools have enrolment schemes, compared with 31 percent of mid-decile,

and 15 percent of low-decile secondary schools. All but 3 percent of schools with enrolment schemes in fact draw students from outside their enrolment zone as well. Forty-one percent of the schools with enrolment zones draw 20 percent of their roll or more from outside their zone.

Mid-decile school rolls are most likely to draw closely from their local community. A quarter of the schools have a student profile that is different from the make-up of the local community in which the school is situated. Low-decile schools principals report that they have more Māori students and those from low-income families than are present in their local community. Conversely, principals of high-decile schools report an over-representation of students from high-income families from their local community. They also report an over-representation of students with high aspirations, whereas principals of low-decile schools report an over-representation of students with low aspirations compared with their school's local community.

Eighty percent of secondary principals see their school directly competing with other schools for students. Some see themselves competing with just a few schools, but the range reaches 21, with a median of around 5 other schools in direct competition. Most of their competitors are within 30 minutes' driving distance. Higher decile schools are most likely to be seen as competitors (59 percent of those who see themselves in direct competition), followed by private schools (47 percent), same-decile schools (47 percent), then lower-decile schools (38 percent).

School actions to encourage students to enrol include attention to the quality of the programme, options for study, and a safe environment. High-decile schools are most likely to offer enrichment programmes for high-achieving students. Schools publicise their NCEA results, especially to feeder schools, and use local newspapers. They also pay attention to the look of their buildings and grounds. A quarter of the principals think they spend more on marketing the school than they would like (more so the low and mid-decile schools). To encourage enrolments, 10 percent say that they spend more on property than they would like.

Some sharing of resources, professional development, and information about individual students occurs in about half of secondary schools. A fifth remain part of voluntary school clusters, which no longer receive Ministry of Education funding. There is some interschool visiting to learn from one another (41 percent; this is most likely to occur in high-decile schools). Principals also report acting as critical friends with another principal (30 percent).

Schools do work together more now to place students who are having difficulty in one school into another (41 percent, a marked increase from 28 percent in 2009). However, fewer schools work together to reduce truancy (33 percent compared with 44 percent in 2009). Most liaise with local primary schools or intermediate schools in relation to student transition to secondary school.

Most principals (85 percent) are interested in establishing new or additional working relations with other local schools. These relations are particularly valuable to share professional development and provide one another with professional support, to learn how other schools are tackling common issues, to explore curriculum areas where the school wants to change its practice, and to offer more subjects. Principals also see benefits in sharing specialist facilities and equipment, collectively having a stronger voice with social agencies, and developing the potential to gain access to new funding sources through applying as a group.

Interaction between secondary schools and the Ministry of Education

There has been some slippage in views of interactions with the Ministry of Education. Sixty-four percent of principals think they get timely and appropriate advice from the regional Ministry of Education office, down from 74 percent in 2009. Only 38 percent think they get such advice from the national Ministry of Education, down from 48 percent in 2009. Views of interactions with the special education services from the Ministry have also slipped: 45 percent reported timely and appropriate advice in 2009; 37 percent report this in 2012.

In contrast, principals are now more likely to think they get timely and appropriate advice from ERO (71 percent, compared with 62 percent in 2009), and from the Teachers Council (53 percent, compared with 45 percent in 2009). Recent ERO reviews appear to be less stressful for schools, with only 13 percent or principals reporting stressful experiences compared with 28 percent in 2009. Over 90 percent of principals are positive about ERO's self-review guidelines, and 77 percent think ERO's national reviews are useful.

Seventy percent of principals think their ERO reviewers understood secondary education, though only 53 percent think that ERO had appropriate levels of subject expertise to make judgements. There is uncertainty about how consistent ERO judgements are across schools. Forty-two percent of secondary principals would prefer formative accountability—based on the school's strategic plan through regular discussions with creditable peers—than adherence to the current ERO framework of reviews, which only occur every 3 to 5 years for most schools. Thirty-two percent of principals are unsure about a change, and 20 percent prefer the existing ERO framework.

More principals now think it takes too much time to provide the Ministry and NZQA with the information they require. The increase since 2009 is most marked for the information required by regional Ministry offices: 43 percent of principals say it takes too much time to provide this in 2012, up from 27 percent in 2009. In part this reflects changes to the role of the regional Ministry offices.

School support services were recontracted at the start of 2011. Regional offices of the Ministry are now responsible for the allocation of Ministry funded professional

development. This was formerly provided through the school support services, with targeting on the basis of school need in relation to better serving the needs of priority groups and raising achievement levels in core areas. Only 12 percent of principals think that this change has resulted in their professional development becoming more useful. These changes had made no difference to 30 percent of the schools. Principals of high-decile schools are most likely to say the changes had made no difference to their school.

Most of the rest of the principals are critical: 37 percent report that their school cannot access what they need, when they need it, and 37 percent think that the professional development they have is less useful now. Eighteen percent cannot access the professional development they need (at all).

The second change affecting school–Ministry interactions at the local level is the introduction of the senior adviser role. Each school has been allocated a senior adviser. Senior advisers are meant to work more closely with each school by using the school charter, annual plan and report as the basis for discussion on the school's progress toward its goals. The proportion of principals who think no notice is paid outside the school to their planning and reporting work decreased from 68 percent in 2009 to 54 percent in 2012. This suggests some change, but not to the extent envisaged by the introduction of this new Ministry role.

Forty percent of the principals think it is too soon to tell how this new role will work out for their school. A third are positive about their adviser's helpfulness, understanding of the school or of secondary education. Twenty-one percent are negative about these aspects of their Senior Adviser.

High- decile schools seem to have less contact with senior advisers—24 percent are unaware of this new role, and high-decile school principals are less likely to indicate whether their experience had been positive or negative.

The third big change in the role of regional Ministry of Education offices is the introduction of student achievement practitioners, who are intended to work with schools to develop their capacity to improve student achievement. They work most with those schools with low student achievement levels. Schools can decide whether they want this support, if it is offered to them. Forty-five percent of the schools had not been offered such support (with no differences related to decile). Of these, a fifth would like such support.

Most of those who had been approached to work with a student achievement practitioner had declined the offer. (Anecdotally, some see the role as sending negative signals about the school; others are unsure about the quality of the process, or have processes of school system change already in place.) Four percent of principals are finding their experience with this new role helpful, and 1 percent are finding it unhelpful.

We asked principals if they wanted to comment on the recent changes to Ministry of Education support for schools. The majority of the 60 comments made (around a third of the principals responding) are critical of these changes.

Ka Hikitia is one of the Ministry's flagship strategies, focused on raising Māori student engagement in school, and achievement. Schools are aware of the need to better engage Māori students in learning—41 percent of the principals identify this as an area where they needed but could not access external expertise to keep developing. The emphasis on raising Māori student achievement is threaded throughout the Ministry-funded professional development, which is not available to all schools. Other support for schools has largely been through electronic resources.

Schools are encouraged to self-review on their progress in improving Māori student engagement and achievement, using a Gains Framework. However, this approach appears to have gained little traction with secondary schools. Only 16 percent of schools are using the Gains Framework and find it helpful. Thirty-eight percent of the principals are unaware of this framework. Forty-two percent had not used it. Awareness is highest, but usage lowest, in low- decile schools. But 75 percent of principals of low-decile schools think their school has ready access to external expertise in relation to better engagement of Māori students in learning, compared with 44 percent of mid-decile, and 33 percent of high-decile school principals.

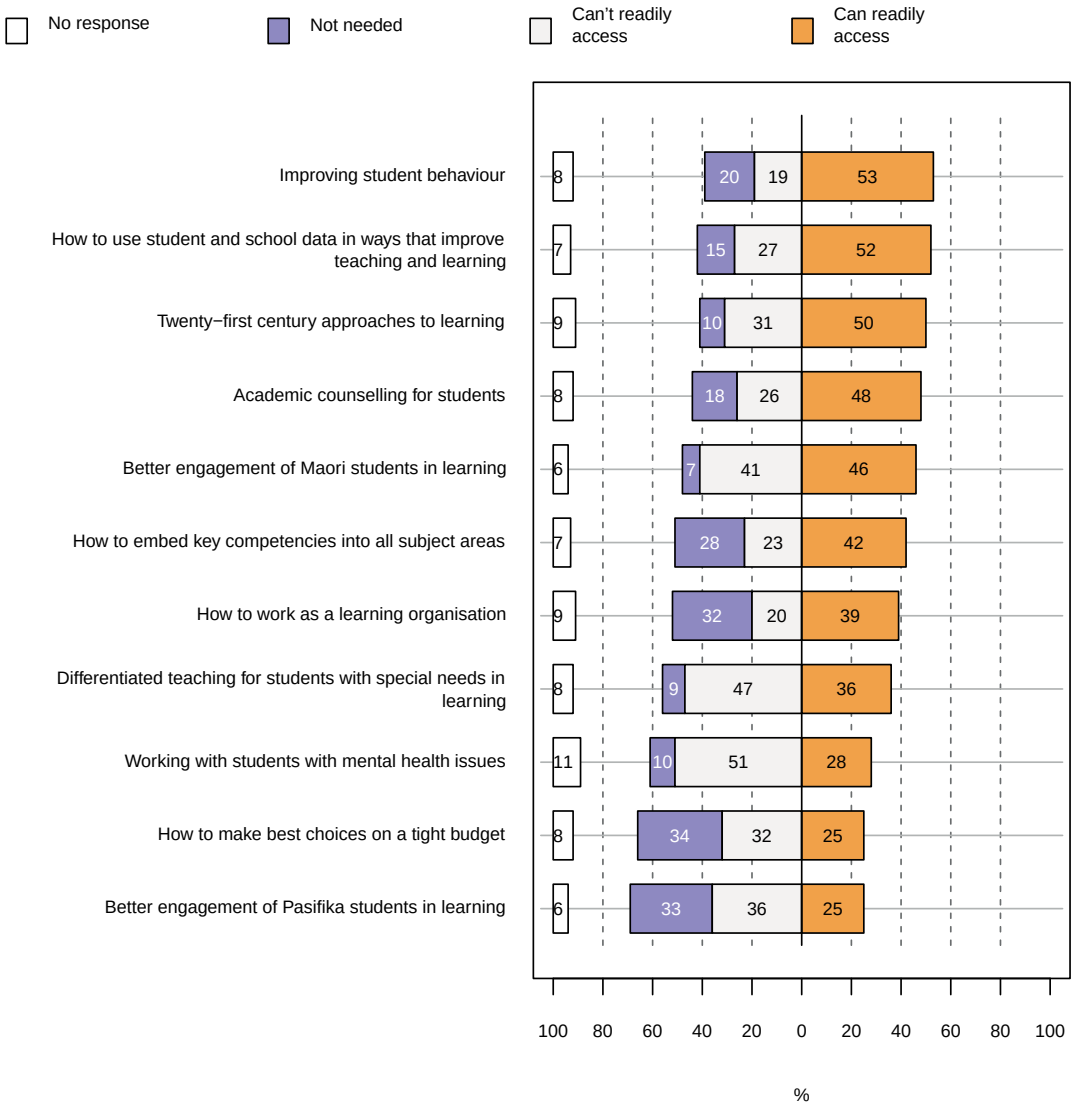
A perennial question in the NZCER national surveys has been around the roles local Ministry of Education offices could or do play with schools. Generally, views and experiences are mixed, showing variation in what is currently happening across the country, as well as trust in the Ministry and its expertise. Secondary principals are twice as likely not to want the Ministry providing the school board with advice on appointing a principal as to want it; views are more evenly divided on wanting the Ministry to have professional discussions with the school based on the annual report and targets, to feed into school discussion of its strategies for student achievement (28 percent wanted such discussion with the Ministry, 22 percent did not). Figure 9 in Appendix 2 gives a full picture of answers here.

The Ministry of Education had provided advice or support on principal appointment for 11 percent of schools in the 2012 survey, and most of the principals of these schools thought the Ministry had done this well.

However, in most of the other areas of Ministry support for schools that we asked about, for those currently with experience of such support, views that it happens well are outweighed by those who think it needs improvement. This is particularly marked in relation to the allocation of professional development paid for by the Ministry. Of the 40 percent who had experience of the new allocation process, 4 percent thought it happened well, 33 percent thought that it needed improvement, and 3 percent did not want the Ministry involved.

The external expertise that most secondary schools identify as needed if they are to keep developing is unevenly available to them in national priority areas, as shown below.

Figure 1 **Principals' reports of their access to external expertise (*n* = 177)**



Principals of low-decile schools were most confident about having access to necessary external expertise for engaging Māori and Pasifika students. They are most likely to have high proportions of these national priority learner groups in their schools—nationally, decile 1–2 schools have a median of 50 percent Māori enrolment and 8 percent Pasifika (with some schools much higher than this), compared with a median of 18 percent Māori enrolment and 3 percent Pasifika enrolment in mid-decile schools, and a median of 8 percent Māori enrolment and 3 percent Pasifika enrolment in high-decile schools. But principals of low-decile schools were less confident than their colleagues in mid- and high-decile schools that they could access external expertise in relation to: making best choices on a tight budget;

improving student behaviour; using data to improve teaching and learning; academic counselling; working as a learning organisation; and 21st century approaches to learning.

The New Zealand Curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum framework was revised between 2002 and 2007, when it was ready in draft form for schools to work with. Its use has been mandatory from the start of 2010. Implementing the New Zealand Curriculum had been an issue identified by 59 percent of the secondary schools in 2009; in 2012, it is an issue for only 14 percent of secondary principals.

The revision of the New Zealand Curriculum was generally welcomed both because of the way it was done—based on a solid scoping and review of evidence—and because it gave a clear framework which was refined with the involvement of the education sector as well as key stakeholders in the wider community. It supports changes in how schools work, as well as what they focus on. We asked principals about the importance they attached to 16 aspects of changes related to the New Zealand Curriculum, and what was happening in their school two years into its mandatory use. Few principals saw the aspects we asked about as unimportant. Over half saw nine of these 16 aspects as 'very important' rather than 'somewhat important'. Around half or more also report that these aspects occur in their school (we did not ask the extent to which they occurred, and there is likely to be variability here). Table 1 shows the details.

Table 1 **Secondary principal views of New Zealand Curriculum and its occurrence in their school (*n* = 177)**

Aspect	Very important aspect of the "big picture" implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum %	Happening now in the school %
School data used to further develop and review programmes to meet needs of particular student groups	84	84
Clear course pathways and support systems to help students make sound academic choices	73	84
Teacher inquiry into quality/effectiveness of their practice	79	81
New types of courses created for diverse learning needs	55	75
Greater range of student leadership opportunities	41	75
Provision of opportunities to learn te reo and tikanga Māori systematically reviewed	55	73
Key competencies consciously incorporated into teaching	58	70
School-wide 'culturally responsive' pedagogy	61	66
Literacy fully integrated across the curriculum	68	58
Expectations at each year level reviewed to ensure coherence through school	52	55
Māori community input into the curriculum sought and informs practice	38	49
Parent input into school curriculum direction sought and acted on	23	44
Students given say in curriculum planning	29	42
Numeracy fully integrated across the curriculum	48	32
More emphasis on future-focused issues: sustainability, citizenship, globalization	18	31
Pasifika community input into the curriculum sought and informs practice	24	25

It's interesting to look at where reports of changes in school practice lag behind the identification of them as being very important. The integration of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum stand out as areas that principals see the value of, but find difficult to put into practice. Community, parent and student input into curriculum planning and the inclusion of the future-focused issues of the New Zealand Curriculum are not straightforward, and they are also aspects that are less likely to be happening in secondary schools.

Course pathways and career education

The majority of principals said their school was providing clear course pathways and support systems to help students make sound academic choices. Career education—related to subject and pathway choice—has also become increasingly emphasised in recent years. Just under half the principals said that careers education was included as a compulsory module of work in a curriculum subject, and 18 percent, as a compulsory subject for senior students. Forty-three percent said career education was included as an optional subject for senior students; and only 8 percent, as an optional subject for junior students. Careers NZ has developed a set of generic career management competencies, and 31 percent of schools were using such competencies within every subject.

NCEA and the national NCEA target

It is now a decade since the introduction of NCEA, the three-level national secondary qualification that plays a central role in secondary schools. The basic framework of NCEA remains much the same: students' performance is assessed against a set of standards, with a mixture of internal assessment within the school, and external assessment through national examinations. But the NCEA has not remained static. Individual achievement standards could be "endorsed" from 2007, with levels of performance at "merit" and "excellence". Such endorsement was added for whole courses from 2011. In the last few years, the standards have been aligned with the New Zealand Curriculum, which became mandatory from 2010. Moderation of teacher judgement of performance has been increasingly emphasised and supported by NZQA.

Rose Hipkins has used the NZCER national surveys to track how people in schools have taken to NCEA, and the impact it has had on their work. The next in her series of NCEA reports will be available shortly. Here I touch on just a few major results from the 2012 survey, drawing from principal, trustee and teacher surveys. Parent views are reported on page 45.

- The majority of principals, teachers and trustees are supportive of NCEA and think it is a valuable record of learning. Nine percent of the schools are also using Cambridge

examinations. Generally, principals are the most positive of these three groups about NCEA and the changes made more recently.

- Principals and teachers are more likely to think that NCEA motivates high achievers to do their best than that it motivates low achievers to do their best.
- Most principals and teachers think that NCEA gives schools freedom about the design of their courses, and the range of standards available allows them to design those courses to meet most students' learning needs.
- However, most principals, teachers and trustees also think that assessment is driving the curriculum, even in Years 9 and 10.
- NCEA workload is identified as a major issue facing their school by more teachers and principals in 2012 than in 2009. In 2012, it is identified as a major issue by 49 percent of principals and 58 percent of teachers.
- Two-thirds of teachers think that moderation of assessments takes too much time, although moderation also provides useful feedback to improve assessments.
- Just over half the teachers feel under unfair pressure to boost their students' NCEA results.
- Publication of NCEA results in "league table" form has an impact on school rolls for around half the secondary schools, with 26 percent seeing some gain, and 31 percent, some loss. High-decile school principals are more likely to feel their school gains from league table comparisons, and low-decile school principals to feel that these comparisons negatively impact their student enrolments.

In 2012 a national target for NCEA success was announced for the first time, as part of the Government's *Delivering Better Public Services* policy package. This target is for 85 percent of 18-year-olds to have NCEA Level 2 or its equivalent by 2017.

How well are schools positioned to reach this target?

- Thirty-one percent of principals thought their school was already there (45 percent of high-decile schools, 15 percent of low-decile schools).
- Another 8 percent are confident they can reach this national target by 2017, through what they are currently doing.
- Fifty-six percent of principals see their school constantly changing things in their effort to increase the number of students gaining NCEA Level 2 or its equivalent. This suggests that the desire to do so is widespread, with many schools needing ongoing support and access to sound knowledge of how to increase student performance.
- Academic counselling to check that a student has taken courses that will give them a good pathway to a qualification occurs in 87 percent of schools. It is less common in low-decile schools (70 percent).

Teachers are less confident than principals about reaching this target: 18 percent think their school is on track to do so (35 percent of teachers in high-decile schools compared with 13 percent of those in low-decile schools and 16 percent of those in mid-decile schools); and 71

percent note they are making changes all the time to increase the number of students gaining NCEA Level 2 or its equivalent.

Many secondary schools extend what they can offer students through work experience (93 percent), school–business links (68 percent), e-learning (67 percent) part-time polytechnic enrolments (50 percent), after-school programmes (46 percent), videoconferencing (41 percent), and trades academy (35 percent). Sharing classes or teachers with another school remains uncommon (18 percent). Low-decile schools are least likely to be offering e-learning (30 percent, compared with 72 percent of mid-decile schools and 85 percent of high-decile schools).

Tracking student progress and engagement

Few schools are not taking advantage of electronic student management systems to track student achievement progress, attendance and behaviour. However, such use is somewhat lower in low-decile schools.

Student views on the school's climate and culture are also sought by 74 percent of the secondary schools, and 67 percent survey student engagement and sense of belonging in the school. Health data are collected by 49 percent of schools, and by 90 percent of low-decile schools, who are likely to have school nurses through Ministry of Health funding.

However, only 49 percent of secondary schools employ someone to enter and manage student achievement data, and only 64 percent have a staff member charged with analysing student achievement data for the school's management and teachers. This may limit the timeliness and effectiveness of schools' data use. Low-decile schools are less likely to employ someone to enter and manage achievement data, or analyse it for school leaders to use.

Most schools have a school target related to student engagement and wellbeing in their annual plan, as well as academic achievement. All low-decile schools have such targets, compared with 87 percent of mid-decile schools, and 82 percent of high-decile schools. Some schools have set themselves the goal of reducing student absence or truancy (36 percent), or stand-downs, suspensions and expulsions and behaviour incidents (23 percent). Low-decile schools are most likely to have such reduction targets. They are also most likely to have health-related targets for students (20 percent, compared with 3 percent of high-decile schools).

Principals' views of their board and its role

Thirty-eight percent of the principals think their school board of trustees is on top of its task; 15 percent see them as (only) coping, or struggling, a small increase from the 12 percent in

2009. High-decile school principals are most likely to see their board as on top of its task (52 percent, compared with 25 percent of low-decile school principals).

As in 2009, principals identify key elements in the role of the board of trustees primarily as providing strategic direction for the school (85 percent), supporting the staff and principal (81 percent), representing parents (68 percent), and scrutinising school performance (62 percent). The board's role as employer of the school principal is less important to principals (47 percent), and less so than in 2009.

Twenty-six percent of principals think their board has all the expertise needed for its role, an increase from the 15 percent who thought this in 2009. High-decile school principals are most likely to think this: 46 percent, decreasing to 15 percent of low-decile school principals.

Forty-three percent of secondary principals have experienced problems in their relationship with a past or current school board, 10 percent of a major kind. However, the principals are generally positive about the way their current board works and the value they add to the school. Nonetheless, 39 percent say their board requires a lot of support from the principal and school management, and 45 percent say that it acts mainly as a sounding board for the principal. This is much the same picture as in 2009. As then, 35 percent think that the overall responsibility asked of trustees is too high.

Principals' work and its support

Secondary principals' median work week is 63 hours, as it was in 2009. Eighteen percent put in more than 70 hours a week. Ninety percent enjoy their jobs, and 80 percent report good or very good morale, slightly down from 86 percent in 2009. However, only 45 percent regard their workload as manageable, and 41 percent report high stress levels. Compared with 2009, more principals feel they can schedule enough time for educational leadership in their school (28 percent compared with 19 percent), but this is still a rather low proportion given the importance of such leadership.

There is a slight slippage evident in the proportion of secondary principals who feel they get enough support to do their job effectively (whether inside or outside the school), from 70 percent in 2009 to 64 percent in 2012. More low-decile school principals disagree that they have this support. There is also a slight slippage in the proportion of secondary principals who feel they have a strong and supportive management team (80 percent compared with 86 percent in 2009). Just over half would like more career opportunities in education beyond their role as school principal. Such opportunities have become more limited over time with our self-managing schools system.

In 2012, secondary principals have more experience in the role than in 2009. Only 14 percent had 2 years' or less experience as a principal, compared with 24 percent in 2009. Their median age was also higher; 28 percent were aged 60 or older compared with 19 percent in

2009. Most (79 percent) had served as deputy principals before taking their first principalship. Secondary principals are likely to have substantial classroom teaching experience (a median of 17 years), and a median of 8 years in secondary school senior leadership before becoming a principal. Many secondary principals have also been principals of just one school (72 percent), and many have also worked only in schools, without taking other roles in education (71 percent); if they have, it is usually as an adviser or lecturer, rather than with a government agency.

Reflecting the higher proportion aged 60 or more, principals' plans in 2012 for their next 5 years are slightly more likely to include retirement than in 2009 (20 percent compared with 17 percent in 2009). Fewer envisage themselves becoming the principal of another school (14 percent compared with 22 percent in 2009), and fewer plan to take a different role in education (17 percent compared with 22 percent in 2009). Sabbaticals continue to feature as a prime way for principals to refresh themselves and get a new slant on education: 36 percent think they will apply for one in the next 5 years.

Ministry of Education funded support for the principals' role relies mostly on the Internet, and the employment advice provided by the New Zealand School Trustees' Association (NZSTA). The Ministry's Educational Leaders' website is used by 70 percent of principals, much as in 2009, though webinars were also taken by 30 percent of principals in the last 3 years. Two-thirds have used the NZSTA's employment advisers in the last 3 years. Sixteen percent of principals have been able to access the new school leadership support allocated by the Ministry. Thirty-seven percent of the principals took part in the first-time principals' programme, and 11 percent have come to their first principalship through the Aspiring Principals' course. Sabbaticals have become more frequent, with 33 percent of the principals who responded gaining leave to undertake a break focused on a particular educational area of inquiry over the last 3 years.

More than 90 percent of principals take part in non-Ministry funded principal groups and networks. Most of this occurs through group meetings or informal discussion and support. A quarter have established "critical friendships" with structured visits to another school, and 14 percent are taking part in an inquiry project to improve their practice. Fourteen percent of the principals mentor another principal, and 11 percent are mentored.

The main things principals would change about their work are much the same as in 2009. Most want more time to reflect, read, or be innovative (78 percent), and more time for educational leadership (71 percent, slightly decreased from 77 percent in 2009). Other things that principals identify among the main things they would change about their work include reducing their administration and paperwork (61 percent), and having a more balanced life (57 percent). They would also reduce external agencies' demands or expectations (41 percent), their workload (38 percent), and the demands of the school's human resources management (35 percent), and property management (34 percent), with greater administrative staff support (35 percent) and more teaching staff to whom they could

delegate things (33 percent). They would like to have more professional dialogue about their work (38 percent). Twenty-nine percent would like it to be easier to recruit good teachers.

Low-decile school principals are the ones most interested in changes to their role; high-decile school principals the least, perhaps reflecting more stable rolls, finances, and less complex student profiles.

Principals' achievements and the issues for their school

The multidimensional nature of school leadership is evident among the achievements principals identify from their work over the last 3 years. Student achievement features prominently, including 71 percent who note Māori student performance levels improving or staying high. School processes that support student achievement—such as a more focused approach to pedagogy and the use of student assessment data to plan learning—are also areas in which two-thirds of the principals can see progress. There is an emphasis on developing strong school cultures. Between 50 and 60 percent of principals note as achievements such things as developing a stronger professional learning and inquiry culture and more leadership roles for teachers; developing student leadership roles and increasing student choices and ability to feed into decisions; retaining or building a strengths-based culture, and one which is inclusive of students with special needs. Fifty-seven percent of the principals think the overall quality of their teachers has remained high or improved since 2009.

Over the last 3 years, 38 percent of the principals have successfully steered their school through a crisis.

Funding continues to top the issues that principals see facing their school. Seventy-six percent see it as an issue, somewhat lower than the 87 percent in 2009. In addition, another 55 percent identified quarterly funding, an issue that particularly affects low- and mid-decile schools. Adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access was an issue for 57 percent of the schools. NCEA workload presented an issue for 49 percent of the principals, up from 39 percent in 2009, and more principals also saw an issue in assessment driving the curriculum (47 percent, compared with 34 percent in 2009). Both these were of particular concern for principals of high-decile schools.

Other issues that are of greater concern now for secondary principals than 3 years ago are getting good quality professional development (40 percent compared with 22 percent), and, despite the economic downturn, keeping good teachers (33 percent compared with 18 percent). There is less concern in 2012 than in 2009 with the quality of teaching in the school (23 percent compared with 39 percent), with motivating students (35 percent compared with 50 percent), or property maintenance and development (38 percent compared with 54 percent).

3. Teacher perspectives

The teachers' questionnaire included questions about what was happening in classrooms: how practices were changing with the New Zealand Curriculum and ICT use. There were also questions about NCEA. Student behaviour was another focus. The questionnaire also asked about the learning opportunities for teachers, and the professional culture and processes in their school. Teachers were asked too about their own job satisfaction and career plans.

Teacher morale and support for professional learning

While 90 percent of secondary teachers enjoy their job, their morale levels are not high: 57 percent report good or very good morale as a teacher, a decrease from the 70 percent reporting this in 2009. Morale levels were lowest in the first NZCER national secondary survey in 2003, the year after the introduction of NCEA (when 43 percent reported very good or good morale levels). In 2012, many secondary teachers are grappling with the alignment of NCEA standards with the New Zealand Curriculum, and with high NCEA workloads.

Morale levels are related to perceptions of workload and support. Only half the teachers think their workload is manageable and fair, and 37 percent think their workload is so high that they cannot do justice to the students they teach.

Just 56 percent of secondary teachers think they get the out-of-school support they need to do their job effectively, and 68 percent, the in-school support they need.

Out-of-school professional learning and development opportunities are uneven. While the government is moving more to electronic provision of teaching guidance and resources on its portal Te Kete Ipurangi, only 63 percent of secondary teachers find this site a useful source of support and links to information they need. NZQA's Best Practice workshops on NCEA assessment and moderation were attended by 62 percent of the teachers, most of whom found them useful. These workshops were the only government-funded support available to 47 percent of secondary teachers in 2012. Only 37 percent could easily access helpful specialist subject advice outside the school when they needed it.

Teachers do use their own connections, but again such use is not the majority experience: 57 percent can easily access a helpful network of teachers of their subject who are interested in similar things, and 55 percent find their subject association really useful. Sixty percent have taken part in professional activities beyond their own school which they find stimulating for their own growth as a teacher, such as NCEA moderation or the recent work aligning the New Zealand Curriculum with NCEA standards. These opportunities are greater in 2012 than in 2009, when 47 percent reported such gains. Only 32 percent have good opportunities to see and discuss the work of teachers in other schools whose work interests them, only slightly increased from the 27 percent in 2009. Sixty-three percent would like more customized advice and support from outside their own school.

Professional learning opportunities that give teachers practical help with engaging students in three of the government's four priority groups are not widespread: 49 percent report such learning in relation to their work with Māori students, 34 percent with Pasifika students, and 35 percent with students with special needs.

The use of reflection and self-review to check and keep developing teaching is common (71 percent). Somewhat more teachers say that they and their school colleagues actively work to engage or motivate all their students than in 2009 (84 percent compared with 78 percent). Three-quarters can get useful feedback on how well they engage students in learning and on their teaching by getting a colleague to observe them with their class. However, only 46 percent say they have good opportunities to observe effective colleagues. Just over half the teachers report a focus in their school on the ongoing learning of teachers as adult professionals. Meetings with teachers' managers and feedback from performance management are used for this purpose in the experience of around a third of the teachers. Only 51 percent say their school leaders ensure they have useful blocks of time for their professional learning.

Experiences are divided around the introduction of new ideas, and the environment seems less supportive for this than in 2009: 48 percent report that their school encourages and supports teachers to experiment with new ideas, compared with 70 percent in 2009. Forty-six percent report that new ideas are hard to put into practice in their school, a marked increase from 25 percent in 2009. This may be related to the greater emphasis on assessment and the workload associated with it that emerges through the 2012 survey responses.

Analysis of student achievement to improve teaching and learning is more likely to be described as very good or good in the school (67 percent compared with 53 percent in 2009). Setting useful school targets for student achievement is also rated more highly (60 percent of teachers rating it as very good or good in 2012 compared with 48 percent in 2009), as is discussion of assessment results between teachers to help students improve their performance (54 percent rating this very good or good compared with 43 percent in 2009).

Heading the list of things that secondary teachers would change about their work were having more time to reflect, plan, and share ideas, and to work with individual students, and reduction of administration and paperwork, and of their assessment workload.

Teachers and their careers

Half the teachers responding are aged 50 or over, an increase from the 45 percent in the 2009 national survey. Thirteen percent intend to retire within the next 5 years. Most intend to stay in their current job or seek more responsibility (though the proportion who think there is career progression available in their school decreased in 2012 to 40 percent, compared with 50 percent in 2009). Eighteen percent would like to shift to teaching at another school. Ten percent are looking to change their career within education. Like principals, some are looking to study awards or sabbaticals to refresh their work (24 percent), and to postgraduate study (16 percent). Only 10 percent think they might change to a career outside education.

Interest in taking on the principal's role has increased: 19 percent compared with 13 percent of secondary teachers in 2009. Those who are interested mostly say they want the challenge of the role, to implement ideas they have, and to work with teachers as well as students.

Main issues for teachers

The top issues facing their school that teachers identify overlap with the top issues identified by principals:

- funding (60 percent, decreased from 68 percent of teachers in 2009)
- NCEA workload (58 percent, increased from 46 percent in 2009)
- adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access (54 percent, increased from 31 percent in 2009)
- motivating students (48 percent, much the same as the 46 percent in 2009)
- assessment driving the curriculum (48 percent, increased from 35 percent in 2009), and
- student behaviour (44 percent, much the same as the 48 percent in 2009).

Teachers show more concern in 2012 with staffing levels at their school (35 percent compared with 17 percent in 2009), getting good quality professional development (37

percent compared with 25 percent in 2009), keeping good teachers at the school (32 percent compared with 23 percent), and the principal's leadership (31 percent compared with 21 percent).

Teachers in decile 1–2 schools identify more issues related to teaching and learning than their colleagues in mid- and high-decile schools. These include student behaviour (65 percent of this group), student achievement (52 percent compared with 34 percent overall), keeping good teachers (47 percent), and attracting good teachers (38 percent compared with 23 percent overall).

In 2009, just before the first year for the mandatory use of the New Zealand Curriculum, 78 percent of secondary teachers said they experienced barriers to making changes to the curriculum they taught. In 2012, this drops to 62 percent, indicating the effect of the New Zealand Curriculum's emphasis on school-based curriculum. Lack of time is still the major barrier, particularly the time taken for NCEA assessments. Other main barriers to curriculum change were NCEA requirements, lack of money, lack of teaching resources, and classes that are too big for the changes teachers would like to make to what they offer students.

New horizons with ICT use

Most teachers see real benefits for student learning from their use of ICT. They think that ICT use makes learning more engaging for students (84 percent). It allows some students to show knowledge and skills that are not so evident when they use the traditional pen and paper (82 percent). Around two-thirds think ICT use in their classes helps students gain a deeper understanding of what they are learning, integrate knowledge from more than one curriculum area and secure more control over their own learning. Forty percent report that it speeds up students' rate of progress, and 39 percent that it gives them insights into how they learn, supporting their greater control over their own learning.

ICT use in classes is also stimulating teachers to think about new ways of teaching and learning (83 percent). Fifty-three percent observe that ICT use leads to more collaborative classroom environments (a useful precursor to the greater emphasis in workplaces now on collaborative work and the importance of such skills in family and personal relationships).

But 52 percent of the teachers say that student use of ICT in their classes is curtailed by slow or unreliable or unavailable equipment or Internet access; and 33 percent because their school system is unreliable, or the school lacks a technician to deal with problems. Twenty-two percent say student use is limited because their school lacks a strong leader for the use of ICT in learning.

So while teachers see benefits, student use of ICT is more likely to occur sometimes rather than frequently. Adding both frequent and sometime use together shows that ICT use in

secondary classes is most likely to include watching videoclips (88 percent), searching for information (84 percent), creating printed documents or presentations (80 percent), practising subject-specific skills (80 percent), and collecting and analysing data (65 percent). Multimedia work occurs in the classes of 48 percent of the secondary teachers taking part in the 2012 national survey; students' maintaining a record of their goals and learning achievements, such as an e-portfolio, in 37 percent, and sharing learning, through blogging or online publishing, in 29 percent.

Supporting students to take responsibility for their learning

The New Zealand Curriculum emphasises the value of students taking responsibility for their learning. To do so, students need to see learning as personally meaningful and play a more active role in assessment. Students can then gain the skills to evaluate their effort in the light of criteria of quality, and in light of the goals they have and needs they identify. Most teachers now offer the majority of their students some experiences that support them to develop these skills. As with ICT use, students are more likely to experience these learning opportunities sometimes rather than quite often or most of the time.

More than 85 percent of the secondary teachers report that their students have at least some opportunity to:

- assess their own work against set criteria
- critique examples of actual work across a range of quality (so they get a sense of the difference)
- assess one another's work and give feedback on it
- identify and pursue an aspect of learning that personally interests them, and
- review their progress with the teacher and parents/whānau.

Some research shows that students are more engaged in learning and make more effort when they also work with their teachers to decide the best way to assess their learning. Such joint work is still on the horizon for many teachers, with around half reporting that their students do not help set assessment tasks or the standards expected for assignments. Students and teachers working together to map out the NCEA credits individual students need for their post-school goals is also something that is not occurring for 46 percent of the teachers.

Ninety percent of teachers talk to students about the links between their subject and future careers, and 58 percent meet with students and their parents or whānau when they are choosing courses to discuss career options and pathways beyond school. Teachers are less likely to say they use the recently developed career management competencies in their courses (35 percent).

Use of student management data systems

Student management systems (SMS) potentially offer teachers valuable information on student attendance and achievement that they can use to identify whether students are on track and engaged. Their usefulness has some way to go. Sixty-five percent of teachers find their school's SMS system easy to use, and 57 percent had good training in how to use their school's SMS.

Three-quarters say they use their school's SMS system effectively to generate reports for each of their students. Around two-thirds report that they could use their school's SMS system to:

- track and alert them to student attendance problems
- log behavioural incidents
- track each student's overall progress
- track literacy and numeracy credits for NCEA.

It is less common to use SMS to store longitudinal achievement data (37 percent), or to link to online systems where parents can check their child's progress (23 percent).

Sixty-three percent of the teachers say they can easily retrieve all the achievement data in all the subjects their students are taking, and 48 percent can easily retrieve a list for a nonstandard student group, such as a specialist class for gifted students. To get a holistic picture of their students, teachers are reliant on one another to enter student achievement data, since 88 percent have to enter their data themselves. Only 36 percent of the teachers work in schools where someone had the role of analysing student achievement data, to provide teachers and school leaders with reports (which would help identify blocks of student need and how well things were working).

New Zealand Curriculum and learning opportunities

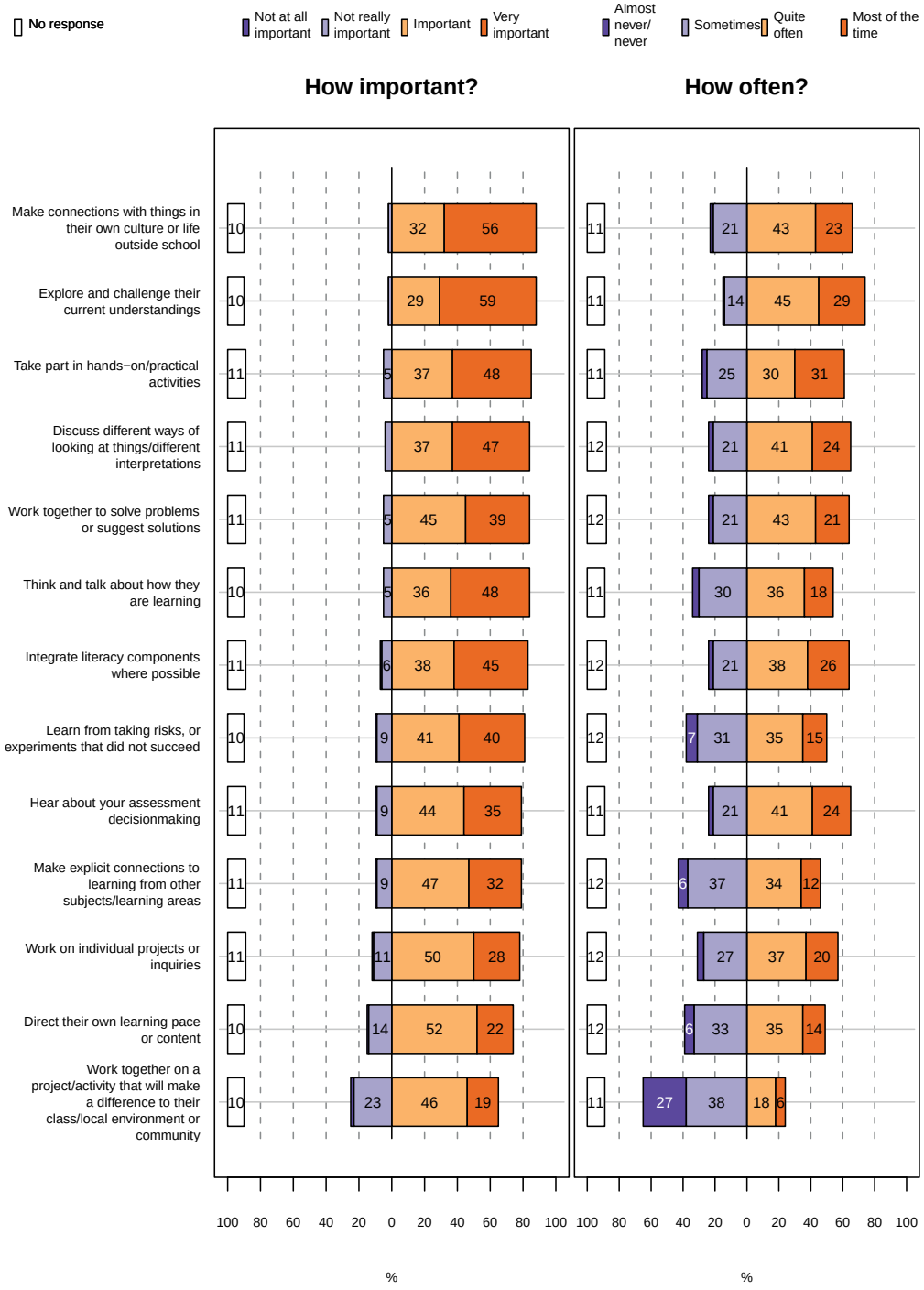
We asked about 13 different ways that teachers could provide students with learning opportunities that are consistent with the intentions of the New Zealand Curriculum. These included being able to make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school, problem-solving and various forms of inquiry. Almost all the secondary teachers taking part in the 2012 national survey think that these active ways of learning are important or very important. The exception is students working together on a project or activity that would make a difference to their class, local environment or community (30 percent do not think this is important for their students).

Most of the activities teachers think are important for their students' learning are also ones they report as occurring quite often or most of the time in their classes, though at a somewhat lower level. The match between thinking a learning experience is important and being able to provide it at this level is closest for things such as exploring and challenging

students' current understandings and taking part in hands-on/practical activities. The widest gap between teacher perceptions of value and what they can actually do is in relation to project learning that produces a benefit for the class or community as well as the individual student (24 percent say this happens quite often or most of the time in their classes, whereas 70 percent think this kind of learning is important).

The figure below shows the detail.

Figure 2 **Teacher views of the importance and frequency of active learning opportunities in their classes (*n* = 1266)**



We also asked secondary teachers the same questions we asked principals about the importance of 16 different activities that support the "big picture" implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum and whether they were occurring at their school. Half of these activities are seen as important or very important by 80 percent or more. Teacher inquiry into the effectiveness of their practice, the use of school data to develop and review programmes to meet the needs of particular student groups, school-wide "culturally responsive pedagogy", the integration of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, and the conscious incorporation of the key competencies into teaching are among these activities.

It is important to 69 percent of the secondary teachers to seek Māori community input into the curriculum and use it to inform school practice, and to 72 percent that opportunities in the school for students to learn te reo and tikanga Māori are systematically reviewed. Similar use of Pasifika community input to inform practice is important to 65 percent. The lowest rating of importance is 60 percent, for giving students a say in curriculum planning, and 61 percent for seeking parent input into the school's curriculum direction.

Table 2 below gives the picture of secondary teachers' perspectives. They are less likely than principals to rate these aspects of the New Zealand Curriculum as "very important". Teachers also report a somewhat lower level of implementation of some of these aspects (see Table 1, p. 13 for the comparable figures for principals).

Table 2 **Secondary teacher views of New Zealand Curriculum and what is happening in their school (*n* =1266)**

Aspect	Very important aspect of the "big picture" implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum %	Happening now in the school %
School data used to further develop and review programmes to meet needs of particular student groups	38	69
Clear course pathways and support systems to help students make sound academic choices	50	67
Teacher inquiry into quality/effectiveness of their practice	44	77
New types of courses created for diverse learning needs	37	48
Greater range of student leadership opportunities	21	51
Provision of opportunities to learn te reo and tikanga Māori systematically reviewed	22	45
Key competencies consciously incorporated into teaching	31	64
School-wide "culturally responsive" pedagogy	35	57
Literacy fully integrated across the curriculum	45	54
Expectations at each year level reviewed to ensure coherence through school	33	50
Māori community input into the curriculum sought and informs practice	16	41
Parent input into school curriculum direction sought and acted on	14	33
Students given say in curriculum planning	13	16
Numeracy fully integrated across the curriculum	36	38
More emphasis on future-focused issues: sustainability, citizenship, globalization	23	25
Pasifika community input into the curriculum sought and informs practice	15	28

Note: In the table indicates fewer teachers than principals think an aspect is very important or is happening.

There are some decile-related differences. Low-decile school teachers are most likely to rate as very important: offering new courses to meet diverse learning needs; giving students a say in curriculum planning and creating more leadership opportunities for them; the integration of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum; having a school-wide culturally responsive pedagogy; and Māori, Pasifika and parent input into the curriculum. However, the patterns of whether these aspects are in place in schools differs little in relation to decile.

Only 5 percent of secondary teachers cannot identify any changes in their teaching and what they have been able to achieve with students over the last 3 years when asked to identify their main achievements as a teacher. Fifty-seven percent say they have been able to improve student achievement, and 49 percent see improvements in their teaching programme. A third or more mention refining or introducing new NCEA assessments, new pedagogical practices, implementing the New Zealand Curriculum or programme innovation, and improving student engagement and behaviour among their main achievements. In terms of the Ministry's priority groups of students: 31 percent feel they are now better able to meet the needs of Māori students, 18 percent, to meet the needs of Pasifika students, and 14 percent, the needs of students with special needs. (Quite a few teachers would not have Māori students and many would not have Pasifika students or those with special needs in their classes).

Student behaviour and school approaches

Fifty-eight percent of secondary teachers experience student behaviour that causes serious disruption to their teaching (41 percent sometimes, and 18 percent often). This is much the same as the 61 percent who reported such disruption in 2009. Teachers in low-decile schools experience more serious disruption to their teaching from students. Only 24 percent have rarely or never experienced this, compared with 36 percent of those from mid-decile schools, and 41 percent of those from high-decile schools. Not surprisingly, student behaviour was most likely to be identified as an issue facing their school by teachers in low-decile schools (65 percent, compared with 44 percent overall), which is much the same proportion as in 2009.

However, in 2012 only 29 percent of secondary teachers mention having more support to teach students with behaviour issues as something they would change about their work, compared with 42 percent in 2009. This may be because schools are putting systems in place to support students. Although just half the teachers think there is a consistent approach to behaviour management in their school, the majority report that their school has systems in place to meet the mental health needs of students, assist students to develop healthy social relationships and support vulnerable students to develop coping skills and resilience. These approaches are consistent with what appears to be the start of a shift away from traditional means of managing student behaviour, with 31 percent of teachers describing a mainly "problem solving approach", with students taking an active role in co-constructing solutions.

Most secondary teachers feel safe in their schools, but 22 percent have felt unsafe in their classes (21 percent occasionally, and 1 percent frequently), and 33 percent in the school grounds and public areas (29 percent occasionally, and 4 percent frequently). The 2012 picture of teacher safety has not changed since 2009. Teachers' feeling of safety are decile-related. Half the teachers from decile 1–2 schools have felt unsafe in their school grounds and buildings at least occasionally, compared with 34 percent of those in mid-decile schools, and 23 percent of those in high-decile schools. Thirty-one percent of teachers in low-decile schools have felt unsafe in their class at least occasionally, compared with 24 percent of those in mid-decile schools and 15 percent of those in high-decile schools.

4. Trustee perspectives

In the NZCER national surveys, two questionnaires are sent to the chair of each secondary school board of trustees, via the school. We ask the chair to give one questionnaire to another board member, preferably one who might have a different view on some issues. Forty-nine percent of those who responded were board chairs. Board chairs tend to be longer-serving, and carry more responsibility, so it is likely that the picture here reflects that. On the whole, chairs and other trustees responding gave similar responses. Any marked differences in views of chairs and other trustees are noted in this section. Principal and parent views of the key elements in the role of boards are also included in this section.

Trustee experience and paths to the trustee role

All but 9 percent of the trustees responding in 2012 have been on their school board for 2 years or more, with a median service of 4.3 years. Board chairs have longer service: a median of 5.4 years, compared with 2.5 for other trustees. Forty-four percent of trustees think they will stand for their school board at the next board election, in 2013, with another 20 percent uncertain.

Just over half the trustees responding are aged 50 or more (55 percent), and 39 percent are in their forties. Most are Pākehā/European (88 percent), with 9 percent Māori, and 2 percent each Pasifika or Asian, and 4 percent another ethnic group. 2011 Ministry figures for secondary trustees' ethnicity show that the survey has a lower response rate from Māori (who form 16 percent of secondary trustees), Pasifika (who form 5 percent of secondary trustees) and other (10 percent). Thirty-nine percent of the survey respondents are women, a little under the national figure for secondary school boards of 43 percent.

Secondary board chairs are somewhat more likely to be male and in their 50s, consistent with the higher numbers of male trustees and those in their 50s. (In other words, once on a secondary school board, it was no more likely for a male to be a chair than a female. The

interesting question is why more males than females stand or are elected to secondary boards).

Most secondary trustees responding are in paid employment (91 percent)—54 percent as employees, and 37 percent as self-employed. Just over half have a university degree. Many of those in paid work have some employer support for their role. Thirty-six percent can use some paid time for their work, 26 percent can undertake board work in work time if they make up the time, and 23 percent can use work equipment.

On average, secondary school trustees give 3.5 hours a week to their role, much the same as in 2006 and 2009, suggesting that the demands of the role have remained stable, even though individual schools have periods where they need more of their board's attention than others. Chairs give more time: 4.5 hours a week, where others give 2.4 hours on average.

Half of the secondary trustees who responded to the survey bring previous school board experience to their role, mostly from serving on primary school boards (50 percent chairs, 35 percent other trustees). Sixty-four percent have also served on other kinds of boards including non-government organisations that employed staff (36 percent), business boards (34 percent chairs, 18 percent other trustees), non-government and voluntary organisations that did not employ staff (19 percent), and other boards (18 percent). These patterns are much the same as those in 2009.

Most trustees have a mix of reasons for why they decided to go on the board of their school: making a contribution to the community is uppermost (78 percent). Just over half saw that they had skills that would be useful to the school, or wanted to help their child. Forty-four percent had been asked to stand or join the board. Twenty-six percent went on their school board because they wanted to improve achievement levels, the same proportion as in 2009. Seeking change at the school is not a widespread reason for taking on the trustee role: 16 percent did so, somewhat lower than the 22 percent who had done so in 2009. Five percent went onto their school board because they thought the school leadership was lacking, fewer than the 8 percent who had had the same reason for joining their board in 2009. Chairs are somewhat more likely to want to change things or improve school leadership and achievement levels.

All but 1 percent of the trustees feel they have gained something from being on their secondary school board. Satisfaction comes from contributing to the school (92 percent), and seeing progress (77 percent). Seventy-six percent also feel they have gained better knowledge about education, 49 percent, more confidence with school staff, and 38 percent, better skills in working with others. Chairs may give more time, but they also report more gains.

Views of the role of school boards

Trustees are most focused on providing strategic direction for the school. Oversight of finances and the principal, and employment of the principal are not key aspects of their role for the majority. Although boards of trustees are accountable to their school community and the Ministry of Education, and are legally crown entities, few trustees emphasise their responsibility to government. Parents' views are similar to trustees. Principals may see more elements as being key to the board's role, but they rank them in much the same order as do trustees and parents.

Table 3 **Views of the key elements of the board of trustees' role**

Key element of board role	Parents (n=1477) %	Trustees (n=289) %	Principals (n=177) %
Provide strategic direction for school	72	89	85
Support school staff/principal	50	45	81
Represent parents in the school	45	40	68
Scrutinise school performance	29	39	63
Oversee school finances	36	35	62
Employ school principal	22	33	30
Oversee school principal	19	18	34
Agent of government/representing government interest	12	8	10

Although there has been some tightening of school accountability to the Ministry of Education since the last NZCER secondary survey in 2009, there has been no increase in the proportion of trustees or principals who see that being an agent of government is a key element of their role.

Board chairs give similar answers to other trustees, with the exception of a greater emphasis on scrutiny of school performance (46 percent compared with 32 percent).

Support for the trustee role

Only 20 percent of the trustees say they have had no formal training or support for their role in the last twelve months. Some have had customized training focusing on their own school, as a whole board, either through a series of sessions (27 percent), or a single session (22 percent). One quarter have participated in webinars offering online seminars with experts

available to answer questions. A quarter mention conference attendance. Others have attended cluster sessions held for a number of boards (22 percent a single session, and 16 percent, a series).

Most of this training is free to boards: either from New Zealand School Trustees' Association (44 percent), which may include Ministry-funded contracts, or from the Ministry of Education (37 percent). Only 18 percent have used school funds to get training for their role.

Gains from this training are headed by better understanding of their role as a trustee (47 percent). Between a quarter and a third gained better understanding of how to review their school's progress, of the achievement information they got from school staff, or the board's employment role. The same proportions were helped to improve their strategic planning, or annual planning and reporting. Board chairs are most likely to report that their training had helped improve strategic planning and led to changing some board processes.

Board chairs are much more likely than other trustees to use other external sources of advice or support for their role, including contact with the NZSTA helpdesk (43 percent), the NZSTA Industrial Advisory service (35 percent), and discussions with NZSTA (34 percent). They also make more use of NZSTA's Internet material (55 percent), and its email tree (20 percent). A quarter have regular contact with trustees from other schools.

Eighteen percent of chairs have had discussions that gave them advice or support with the Ministry of Education over the past 12 months.

Thirty-nine percent of trustees use Internet material from the Ministry of Education. However, not many use the specific resources that the Ministry has produced to support school boards in their role: 23 percent used the *Effective Governance* resource, 5 percent, the *Strengthening Targets* resource, and 4 percent the *Annual Report* resource.

Discussions with ERO during the course of their school's review were a source of advice or support for 29 percent, and 25 percent have used ERO materials. Only 10 percent have used Internet material from NZQA.

The most frequent sources of advice or support for trustees comes from within the school: 55 percent have used the principal or school staff, and 42 percent, other trustees on their board.

Most of the trustees feel that they have ready access to information at the school to help them in their role. Fifty-four percent can look at archives or records of previous board papers, 43 percent access information online, and 27 percent, a library of relevant material. Sixteen percent of the trustees have used an induction pack about the school, their board, and the way it works in the past 12 months. However, most trustees had been on their board for 2 years or more when the survey was undertaken.

A quarter of secondary trustees feel that the overall amount of responsibility asked of them is too much, a similar proportion as in the 2009 national survey.

As in previous surveys, all but 7 percent of trustees would like to make some changes to their role. What they would like to change also looks similar to 3 years ago, with two exceptions. While getting more funding for the school tops the list (57 percent), this is much lower than the 82 percent who sought this change in 2009. Twenty-eight percent would like to reduce what the Ministry of Education expects their school to provide in relation to its funding, down from 42 percent in 2009.

Around a quarter of trustees would like to work more with other schools, improve their knowledge or training, have more time to focus on strategic issues, and more guidance on how to use achievement data to inform board decision-making. Between 14 and 20 percent would like to receive more support and advice from the Ministry of Education, have better information from the Ministry to inform their decisions, reduce compliance costs related to education administration, reduce their workload or paperwork, receive more support from parents, more support or advice from independent educational experts, and have a clearer distinction between governance and management.

Interaction with the local Ministry of Education

More trustees report that their local Ministry office is providing them with advice or support in 2012 than did so in 2009. Sixty-one percent had some board training from the Ministry. Just over half had experience of the Ministry providing advice or support if they had a problem, or relating to property. The schools of around a third of the trustees have had professional discussion on their annual reports and targets. The Ministry is more likely to provide advice on professional experts who could help the school board appraise their principal (33 percent of trustees) than such advice in relation to principal appointment (21 percent of trustees). Not wanting Ministry advice or support is most marked in relation to principal appointments, with 34 percent of trustees not wanting any advice and 29 percent not wanting any support for this. Otherwise, most trustees accept that the Ministry has a role in working with them.

While the Ministry is more likely to be working with schools and boards now, views are decidedly mixed about how well it does this. Views that the Ministry work with the school needed improvement are most likely to be mentioned in relation to work on property; in other areas views are divided among those who think improvements are needed in the Ministry work, and those who have good experiences. The interesting exception is around principal appointment and appraisal, where those who had good experiences with Ministry advice and support are a much larger proportion than those whose experiences left them wanting improvements.

If their closest Ministry office had responsibility for allocating resources for local areas, most trustees think their board should have some involvement—43 percent as part of a decision-making group, 41 percent as part of an advisory group. However, 22 percent think that board involvement should only be to advocate for their own school (even if part of an advisory or decision-making group).

Board experience and skills

We asked trustees whether their board has experience and skill in 16 aspects of their work. On average, they have experience and skills in around half these aspects. Only a quarter of trustees think that their board has all the expertise it needs, among board members. The table below shows the aspects trustees feel most confident they can cover on their board and those they feel they need to have on the board. Interestingly, these do not add up to 100 percent (for example, while 57 percent of the trustees report that their board has someone with knowledge about human resources, only 8 percent identify this knowledge about human resources as a gap on their board). This suggests that trustees do not expect their board to have among themselves all the knowledge and skills needed to carry out its responsibilities: that school staff and others can provide these.

Table 4 **Trustee views of their board's experience and skill (*n* = 289)**

Experience and skill area	Currently have on board %	Need on the board %
Finance	82	19
Governance	70	10
Strategic planning	70	15
Education	69	7
Property maintenance and repair	68	11
Understanding student achievement data	65	11
Human resources	57	8
Links with local iwi	50	22
Links with local employers	43	11
Legal	37	19
Public relations	34	11
Community consultation	33	12
ICT	29	13
Pasifika networks	29	14
Industrial relations	29	7
Fundraising	27	14

What boards do

Overall, secondary boards spend most of their time on financial management, strategic planning, and property.

Financial management and staying within budget is also the top item identified by trustees as their board's main achievements over the last year (71 percent). Positive views of their board's strategic planning (60 percent) and property improvements (59 percent) were not far behind in these achievements. Sixty-two percent of the trustees identify improvements in student achievement at their school, with 49 percent specifying improvements in Māori student achievement, and 24 percent in Pasifika student achievement. Keeping the quality of teaching high or improving it has been an achievement for the boards of 57 percent of the trustees, and keeping good staff, for 55 percent. Forty-nine percent saw their board making progress on their school targets. Forty-two percent mentioned improvements in student behaviour. Trustees were also aware of more use of ICT in learning (42 percent), and analysis of pathways their school could provide students in terms of qualifications (25 percent). Thirty-nine percent were pleased that their school could maintain the range of courses it provided, an issue linked to financial management.

Asked how they thought their board was doing at present, 34 percent described it as on top of its task (an increase from the 30 percent in 2009), 56 percent as making steady progress, and 8 percent as coping. Forty-two percent of the trustees said their board regularly reviewed its own processes, and 40 percent said this sometimes occurred.

Trustee contact with school community

Only 9 percent of school trustees have little or no contact with parents of the school's students. Nineteen percent also help or work at the school. Fifty-six percent are satisfied with their level of contact with parents, and 9 percent are not sure. Chairs have a wider range of contacts than other trustees.

Parents have raised issues with the boards of 59 percent of the trustees. As in previous surveys, they are most likely to raise issues related to discipline, student behaviour or bullying (54 percent of trustees report this, up from 44 percent in 2009), or dissatisfaction with a staff member (41 percent of trustees report this, up from 31 percent in 2009). Other issues raised by parents cover a wide range, including school spending, provision for Māori students, students with special needs, the school enrolment scheme, transport, class size and extracurricular provision.

Most of the trustees (85 percent) say their boards have consulted with their community in the last 12 months. Consultation is most likely to take the form of written questionnaires to parents and whānau (46 percent), public meetings or workshops at the school (36 percent), inviting parents to board meetings (29 percent), asking questions in the school newsletter (28

percent), email surveys of parents and whānau (25 percent, increased from 11 percent in 2009), hui (25 percent), or public meetings or workshops in the community (16 percent).

Community consultation covers different topics in different schools. Forty-three percent of the trustees whose board had undertaken consultation mention the school's strategic planning, charter or vision. Consultation in some of the key policy areas has increased since 2009: 37 percent of trustees say their board had consulted in the last 12 months on provision for Māori students (increased from 28 percent in 2009), 34 percent on student achievement (increased from 28 percent in 2009), and 21 percent, on provision for Pasifika students (increased from 12 percent in 2009). Consultation about provision for students with special needs (8 percent) is slightly increased from 6 percent in 2009, while consultation about provision for students whose English is a second language (3 percent) was lower than the 5 percent in 2009. Secondary schools are also consulting about curriculum or subject options (29 percent, decreased from 34 percent in 2009), reporting to parents (29 percent), uniforms (27 percent), the school culture or climate (25 percent), ways of working with the parent and whānau community (21 percent), and the health and wellbeing of students (19 percent), among other things. Twelve percent of the trustees' boards had consulted about the incorporation of te reo and tikanga Māori, and 9 percent, local iwi educational priorities.

As with most consultations, school–board community consultation involves a minority of those whose views are sought. A quarter of the trustees whose boards had consulted with their community in the previous 12 months estimate that fewer than 10 percent of parents had taken part in these consultations, 23 percent estimate between 11 and 25 percent, and 14 percent, between 26 and 50 percent.

Issues identified by trustees

Funding perennially tops the issues that trustees identify as facing their school. In 2012, 68 percent mention funding. Adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access comes second, at 43 percent, followed by student achievement and property (40 percent each), Māori student achievement (39 percent), and then parent support for their children's learning (29 percent), student behaviour (27 percent), and NCEA workload (26 percent).

Board chairs were more likely than other trustees to identify the shift to quarterly funding of schools as a major issue for their school (27 percent compared with 15 percent of other trustees). They were also more concerned with funding (74 percent compared with 61 percent of other trustees); and Pasifika student achievement (27 percent compared with 16 percent).

Decile-related differences in school boards

In the New Zealand experience of school self-management, low-decile schools have been more likely than others to have issues with governance and school management, sometimes also related to their smaller size, with less of a pool to draw from for trustees, and often facing more challenging issues.[1] High-decile schools can also stand out from others in terms of the experience and skills trustees can offer. This means that school governance takes a different shape in different social contexts.

The 2012 NZCER national secondary survey shows that, as in 2009, trustees in low-decile schools are much more likely to go onto their board to improve achievement levels (41 percent, compared with 21 percent in high-decile schools), and to see the scrutiny of school performance as a key element in board work (59 percent compared with 36 percent of high-decile school trustees).

Low-decile schools do get more support from the Ministry of Education, with 48 percent of trustees saying their board had been offered free training. Trustees in these schools are more interested than others in improving their knowledge and getting more training (44 percent, compared with 27 percent of high-decile trustees), having more guidance on how to use achievement data to inform board decision-making (41 percent compared with 27 percent of high-decile trustees), and having better information from the school for the same purpose (26 percent, compared with 5 percent of trustees from high-decile schools). High-decile school trustees were the ones most interested in reducing compliance costs associated with education legislation (29 percent compared with no trustees in low-decile schools). They were also the ones least interested in having Ministry advice and support.

Trustees in low-decile schools are more likely to have parents coming to board meetings (44 percent, compared with 13 percent in high-decile schools), but to play less of a role in school functions for parents. None attend PTA meetings, suggesting that these largely fundraising groups are not active in low-decile schools. Only a third of the low-decile school trustees are satisfied with their level of contact with parents, compared with 70 percent of those at high-decile schools. Consultation with parents is more likely to be about student achievement in low-decile schools (44 percent compared with 21 percent of high-decile schools), and behaviour (41 percent compared with 5 percent in high-decile schools), It is less likely to be about the school strategic plan (22 percent compared with 38 percent of trustees in high-decile schools).

Eighteen percent of trustees on low-decile school boards are currently not in paid employment, compared with 2 percent of those on high-decile school boards. Almost half those on high-decile boards have a postgraduate degree or diploma (48 percent, compared with 22 percent of those on low-decile school boards).

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[1] Wylie, C. (2012). *Vital Connections. Why we need more than self-managing schools.* Wellington: NZCER Press.

Only 11 percent of low-decile school trustees think their board has all the expertise it needed, compared with 36 percent of high-decile school trustees. The aspects of board work that low-decile school trustees identify as most lacking on their board are finance, understanding assessment data, strategic planning and legal expertise. Only 11 percent think they have ICT experience and skill on their board, compared with 36 percent on high-decile school boards; and they are less likely to mention the increased use of ICT in learning as one of their board's achievements over the past year. However, they are more likely to mention improvements in student behaviour—though they are also most likely to identify student behaviour as a major issue for their school (56 percent compared with 4 percent of high-decile schools).

Half the high-decile school trustees think their board is on top of its task in terms of its performance, compared with 15 percent of low-decile school trustees. Regular board review of their own processes is also more likely to be reported by high-decile school trustees (61 percent compared with 26 percent of trustees in low-decile schools).

Funding most concerns trustees from mid-decile schools, which receive less additional government funding than low-decile schools, and can usually raise less money themselves than high-decile schools.

Generally, trustees from high-decile schools identify the least number of major issues facing their school. They are less concerned than their colleagues serving low and mid-decile schools about student achievement levels, Māori student achievement, attracting and keeping good teachers, parental support for learning, or a declining school roll.

5. Parent perspectives

The parent survey went to 32 schools, providing a cross-section of secondary schools in terms of school decile.[2] However, the random selection produced more state-integrated schools in the 2012 survey than the 2009 survey. The schools were given guidance on how to randomly select a sample of one in five parents to be sent the survey, which was returned directly to NZCER.

Eighty-three percent of the parents who filled in the questionnaires were mothers. Sixty-nine percent of the parents responding were Pākehā/European, 12 percent were Māori, 6 percent Asian, 5 percent Pasifika, and 7 percent gave other backgrounds, including South African, Australian, a range of Middle Eastern, European and American countries, and 'New Zealander'. Based on the distribution of student ethnicity nationally, the survey has a higher response rate from Pākehā/European and Asian parents.

The parents' social characteristics—gender, ethnicity, and qualification levels—were much the same as for the 2009 NZCER secondary national survey. However, the 2012 respondents are more likely to come from decile 9–10 schools than in 2009, and less likely to come from decile 3–10 schools.

[2] 32 schools agreed to take part in the parent survey; no questionnaires were received from parents whose children attended 4 of these schools. Based on roll numbers for the 28 schools whose parents did reply, the response rate ranged from 11 to 57 percent per school, with an overall response rate of 26 percent.

School choice

Access to secondary schools starts with family choice. Many secondary schools have enrolment zones in place, to provide students with access to a local school. Single-sex schools and integrated schools draw from wider catchments. All but 9 percent of parents say the school their child[3] attends was their first choice of school. This is much the same proportion as in 2009 and fewer than the 16 percent who said their child was not at their first choice of school in 2006. The low proportion and the trend over time both suggest that the degree of choice in the system is sufficient for the majority of families with secondary-aged students. However, Māori whānau are more likely to say their child's school was not their first choice (14 percent), as are those attending a decile 1–2 school (18 percent).

Forty percent of the 2012 parents responding chose a secondary school that was not their closest school. This is higher than the 29 percent who did so in the 2009 survey: but this difference may simply reflect the higher number of high-decile state-integrated schools in the 2012 sample. Only 13 percent of decile 1–2 school parents had chosen a school that was not their closest school, compared with 51 percent of decile 9–10 school parents.

Just under half the parents say they could access the school they chose because they live in its enrolment zone. This included some who chose a school that is not the closest to them. Sixteen percent chose schools with "special character", such as religious affiliation, whose criteria they met. Most of these schools are not the closest school to the family home. Thirteen percent gained a place through going into the ballot for a school whose zone they lived beyond. Five percent were on the priority list for the school (e.g., accepted for enrolment in a special programme run by the school, or sibling of a current student). Seven percent chose a school that had no enrolment zone. Decile 9–10 school families are less likely than parents at mid- and low-decile schools to have gained access to their school through living in its zone (38 percent), and more likely to have gained access through ballot (24 percent), or meeting the special character criteria of the school (26 percent).

A quarter of the parents whose child was not at their first choice of school say this is because their child did not want to attend that school—indicating that students' views carry weight in the final decision. Others had not been able to access their first choice of school because they live outside its enrolment zone (38 percent of this group, 3 percent of all parents), it cost too much (25 percent, 3 percent of all parents), or because of a lack of transport (10 percent, or 2 percent of all parents).

Secondary school choice is usually based on more than a single information source, with most parents indicating two or three sources. The most prominent sources are visits to the

[3] We asked parents to focus on their youngest child in answering most questions about their school. Thirty percent had more than one child attending their school at the same time: 26 percent had two children there, 4 percent had three children, and 1 percent had more than four. The secondary schools included Year 7–15 schools as well as Year 9–15.

school (53 percent, increased from 44 percent in 2009), and personal knowledge and networks: older children from the family already attending (43 percent), living in the school zone (41 percent), opinions of other parents (38 percent), the decisions of their child's friends (31 percent), and experiences of other children the family know (30 percent). A quarter look at the school's most recent ERO review (up from 19 percent in 2009). Fifteen percent look at the school's website (up from 10 percent in 2009). Only 5 percent each mention the school's annual report, or a newspaper story about the school.

Families whose child attends a decile 1–2 school are most likely to mention previous family attendance (37 percent compared with 22 percent overall), and least likely to mention visiting the school (34 percent, compared with 53 percent overall), or reading the school's most recent ERO report (12 percent compared with 25 percent overall).

Parent views of their child's school experiences

We asked parents what they felt about 21 aspects of their child's experience at the school. They are largely positive. Eighty-one percent are generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling (11 percent are unsure, and 5 percent are not). This is much the same proportion as in 2009.

2012 parent views about teachers' work to engage their child in learning are somewhat more positive than in 2009, suggesting that work in secondary schools to improve student engagement in learning is having some effect. For example, 60 percent of parents think that the cultural identity of their child is recognised and respected, up from 53 percent in 2009 (32 percent are unsure or neutral, and 6 percent think it is not). Forty-two percent of parents now think their child's teachers make an effort to understand things about their family and culture, up from 33 percent in 2009 (21 percent are unsure, or neutral, and 14 percent think they do not). Sixty-eight percent think their child's teachers provide clear feedback to their child about their work, up from 61 percent in 2009 (20 percent are unsure, and 11 percent think they do not). Forty-eight percent get good ideas from the school about how to help their child's learning, up from 35 percent in 2009 (33 percent are unsure, and 18 percent say they do not).

The four graphs below provide details of the 21 aspects we asked about.

Figure 3 **Parent views of their child's courses (*n* =1477)**

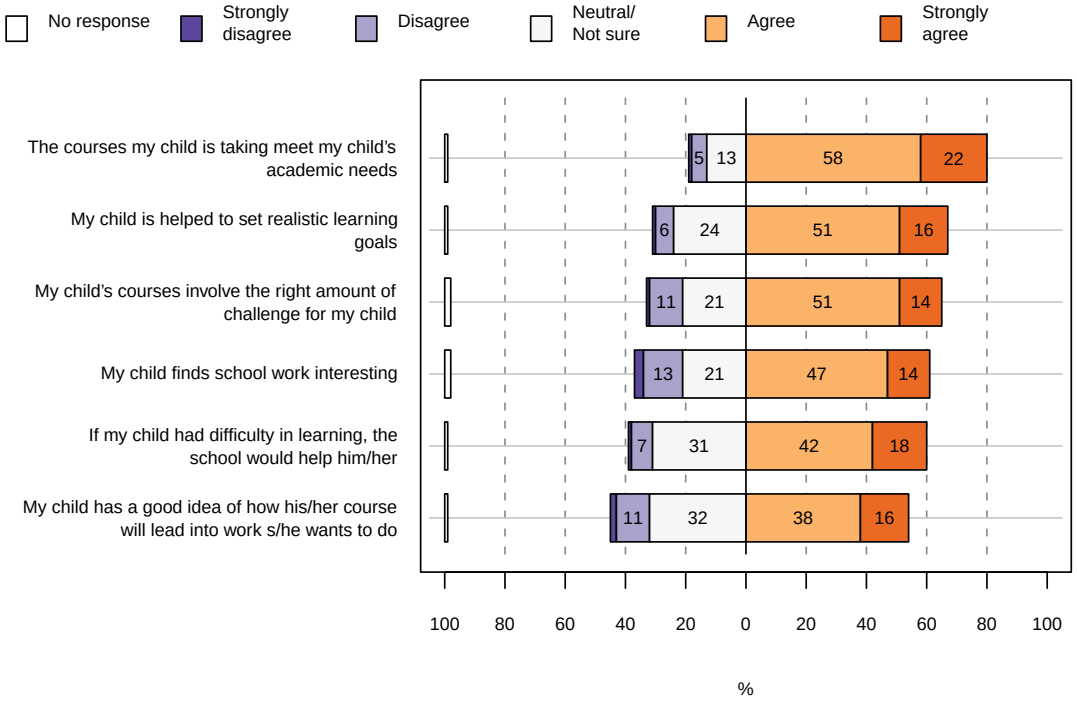


Figure 4 **Parent views of their child's teachers (*n* =1477)**

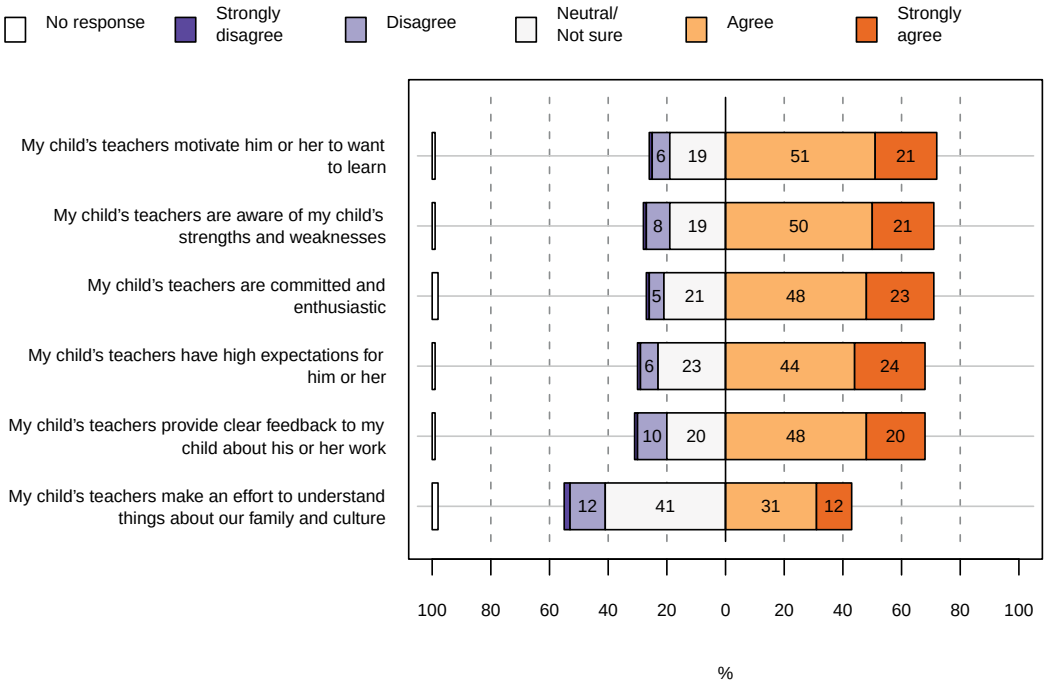


Figure 5 **Parent views of their child's safety and belonging in the school (*n* =1477)**

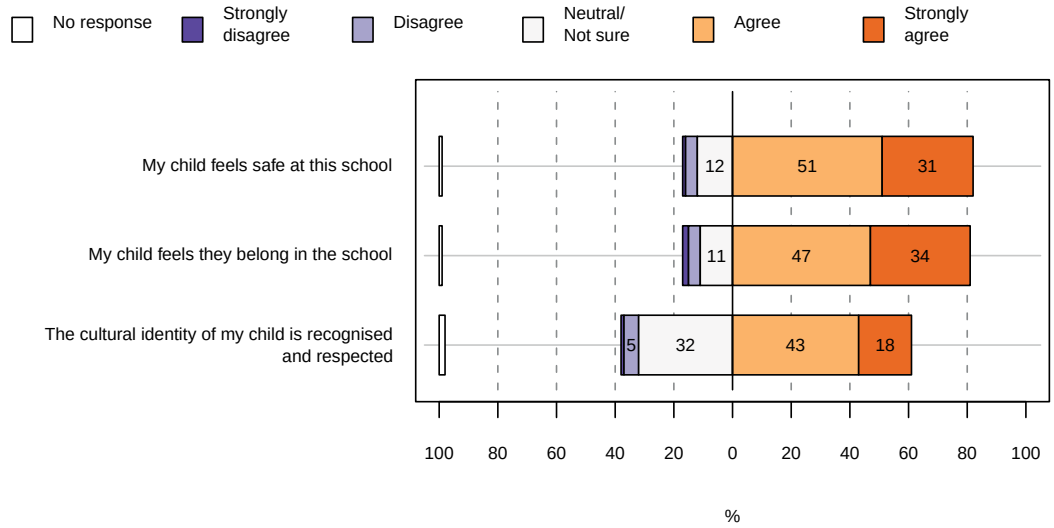
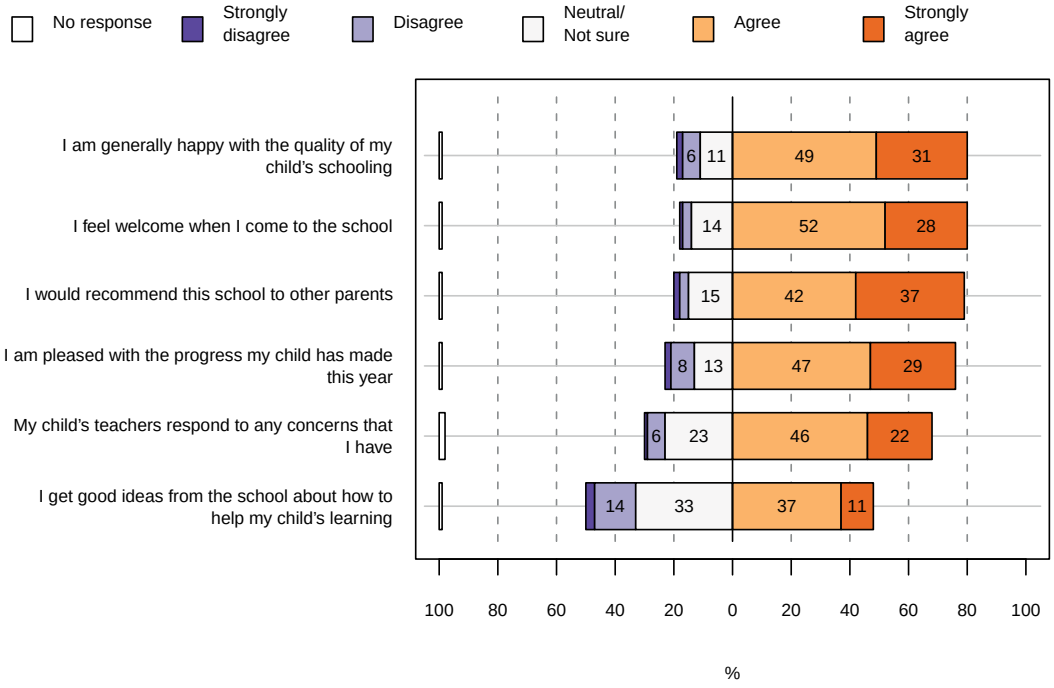


Figure 6 **Parent views of their child's school and progress (*n* =1477)**



Differences in parent views show some suggestive but not statistically significant relationships with differences in ethnicity. Māori whānau are more likely, but not on every item, to report negative views than Pasifika or Asian parents; however, the proportion of Māori whānau who report negative views is usually much the same as for Pākehā parents or

those who describe their ethnicity as 'other'. Of interest given the increased emphasis on the importance of affirmation of cultural identity through education is that 71 percent of Māori whānau and 75 percent of Pasifika parents think that their child's school recognises and respects the cultural identity of their child; most of the rest of these two groups are unsure. Nine percent of Māori whānau and 4 percent of Pasifika parents think their child's school does not show this recognition and respect. There are no ethnic differences in relation to parent satisfaction with the quality of their child's school.

School decile is generally not related to parent views of their child's school experiences. Decile 1–2 parents are somewhat less likely to say they would recommend their child's school to another parent (71 percent compared with 79 percent overall), and to say they are generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling (78 percent compared with 81 percent overall). These differences are not statistically significant.

Parent views of school support for their child's development

The majority of parents think their child's school is helping their child develop skills that are needed to make the most of life, and to use in employment, social contributions and relationships with others. Decision making, goal setting and working towards goals, and self-management, as well as discovering a range of interests and passions, are identified by around a fifth of the parents as needing more support from their child's school. The two graphs below have the detail.

Figure 7 **Parent views of how well their child's school is fostering their child's key competencies (*n* = 1477)**

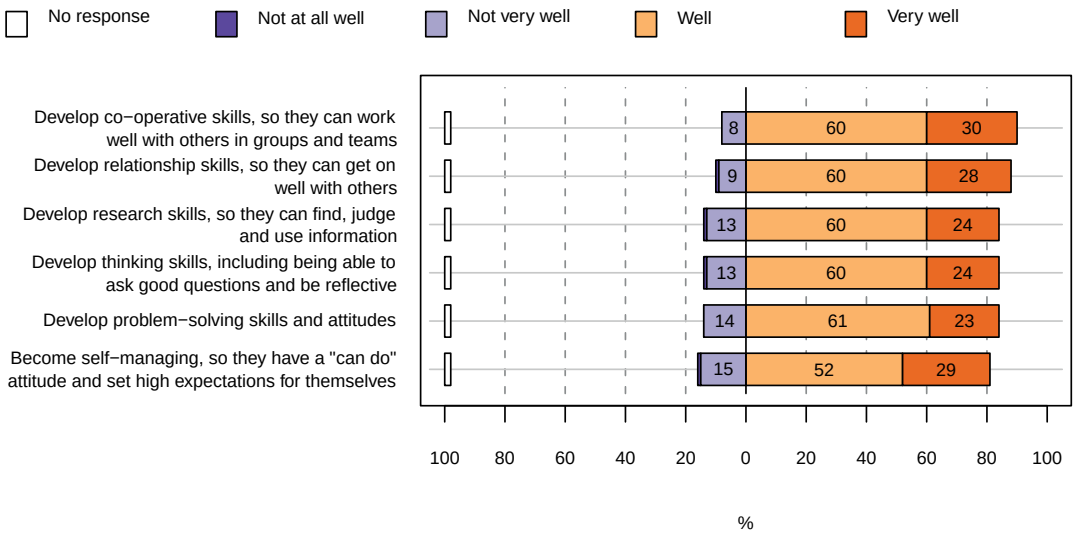
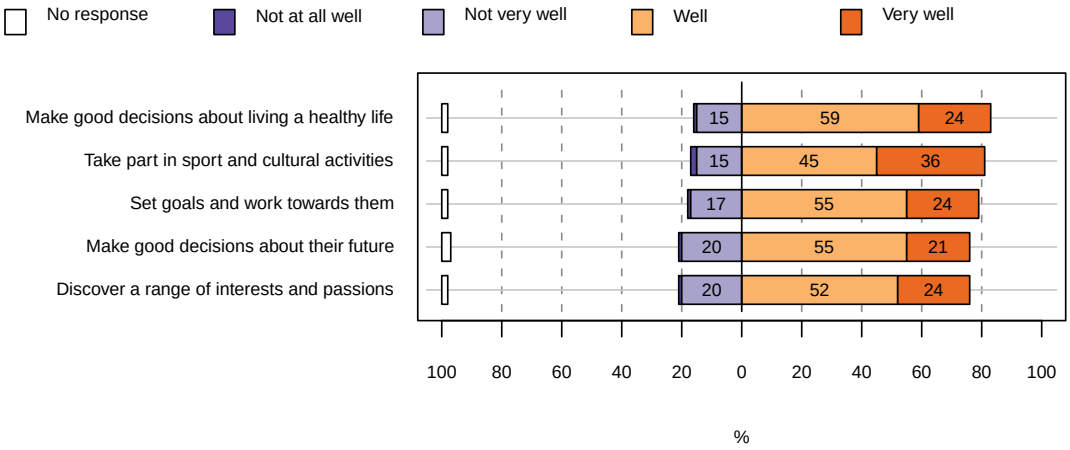


Figure 8 **Parent views of how well their child's school is fostering their child's overall development (*n* = 1477)**



There are no differences related to parental ethnicity; parents whose child attends a decile 1–2 school tend to be more positive about the support their child gets for their overall development.

Changes parents would like

While the majority of parents are generally satisfied with their child's schooling, 51 percent would like to see some change, and a further 16 percent are unsure, figures that were much the same in 2009.

We provided parents with a set of 25 items to identify the kind of change they would like. Top of the list of desired changes are items around individual learning and communication with parents: more individual help for students (30 percent); more communication about progress (30 percent); smaller class sizes (29 percent); and more specific information for parents so they can support their child's learning (25 percent).

Between 15 and 21 percent identify changes they would like to see in their child's school that are consistent with the general direction of the New Zealand Curriculum. These parents want more opportunities for students at the school to learn about being a citizen through working in the community, having more interesting work and more challenging work, more opportunities for students to feed into decisions or make choices, and more opportunities to learn about big issues affecting the world, like the environment and sustainability. Decile 1–2 school parents show somewhat more interest in their child's school providing more challenging and academic work, opportunities for student decision or choice, and opportunities to learn about big issues.

Around 13 to 15 percent of parents focus on student behaviour, wanting more emphasis on values, relationships and social skills, less bullying, stricter discipline, or more emphasis on students supporting each other. This is particularly evident for decile 1–2 school parents.

Pasifika parents are most likely to indicate a desire for change, particularly in the items related to the New Zealand Curriculum, as well as wanting more parent involvement, more homework and stricter discipline.

Interest in having more information

Parents are interested in knowing how their child is progressing. While few parents think the information they get about their child's overall learning progress and programme is poor, around a third rate it as satisfactory rather than good or very good. However, parent views here are somewhat more positive than 3 years ago: 60 percent of parents rate the information they get on their child's overall learning progress as good or very good in 2012, compared with 53 percent in 2009; and 59 percent rate the information they get about their child's overall learning programme as good or very good in 2012, compared with 50 percent in 2009.

In 2012 we also asked parents about the quality of information provided by the school in relation to qualifications and planning for the future. Here there is less satisfaction, with 42 percent thinking that the school gives them good or very good information on what their

child needs to do to achieve the qualifications they would like, and only 26 percent of parents thinking that the school gives them good or very good information on how different course options are connected to options in tertiary education and employment. Parents whose child attends a mid- or high-decile school are less satisfied with the school's provision of this kind of information than parents whose child attends a low-decile school.

The NZCER survey went out early in Term 3. By then, 85 percent of the parents who responded had met one or more staff members to discuss their youngest child's progress during the 2012 year. They are most likely to meet subject teachers (67 percent), or form teachers (57 percent). Thirty-five percent met with the school dean. Only 7 percent had met their child's career advisor to talk about that child's progress. Over half of parent–teaching staff meetings about a child's progress included that child.

Decile 1–2 school parents are most likely to have met their child's form teacher, school dean or careers adviser, but less likely to have met their child's subject teachers.

Forty-seven percent of parents would like more information about their child's progress than they currently get, with another 19 percent unsure. Around a third of parents of secondary students would like information about the assessments or tests their child has taken, whether they are on track to get the qualification they want, more information about the options open to their child in terms of their school progress, or the careers guidance support their child is receiving, electronic access to their child's school work and progress, and ideas for how they can support their child's learning.

Thirty-eight percent of parents now have electronic access to their child's school work and progress. These parents tend to be somewhat more satisfied than others about the quality of the information they receive from the school, with only 30 percent of this group seeking more information on their child's progress compared with 56 percent of those without electronic access. Decile 1–2 school parents are much less likely to have such electronic access (19 percent).

Pasifika parents are somewhat more likely to express interest in having more information related to the careers guidance their child had, and if they are on track to get the qualifications they want.

Information about the school and parent consultation

Almost all parents have access to up-to-date information about their child's school, with the Internet playing a large role. Sixty-six percent get school newsletters by email. Parents of decile 1–2 school students and Māori parents are least likely to get information this way (30 percent and 44 percent respectively). Sixty-four percent of parents use their school's website, but only 29 percent of decile 1–2 school parents do so. Forty-four percent get their school

newsletters on paper. Parents also find things out from other parents (28 percent), and the local community newspaper (19 percent).

Only 16 percent identify their school's latest ERO report as a source of up-to-date information about the school. Just 13 percent turn to the school's annual report. Interestingly, decile 1–2 parents are more likely to mention their school's annual report as such a source (26 percent). However, the main mechanisms of school accountability are not the sources used by most parents to find out more about their child's secondary school.

Twenty-eight percent of parents would like more information about their child's school, with around 20 percent each mentioning information about overall student achievement or what is taught (courses and curriculum), and around 15 percent the school's use of funds, board of trustees' decisions, or school policies. Eleven percent identify school progress on its annual targets as something they would like to know more about. Pasifika parents show the greatest interest in knowing about the school's overall student achievement (44 percent), and curriculum, 40 percent). Decile 1–2 school parents also show the greatest interest in knowing more about the curriculum, and also about school policies and board decisions.

Forty percent of secondary parents think their child's school genuinely consults them about new directions or issues at the school, and 27 percent are unsure about this. A sizeable minority, 30 percent, think that such consultation does not occur at their school. But while some parents do not know how their school develops its charter and annual plan (which include annual targets), only 4 percent would like more input into this process. Parents also have mixed views about contact with their school's trustees, with 28 percent saying they had enough contact, 27 percent being unsure about whether their contact is enough, and 30 percent not satisfied with their contact with the school's trustees.

Just over a quarter of parents of secondary students would like to have a say in some area of the school, and feel they cannot. In 2012, 14 percent would like to have a say about their child's class or teacher, compared with 20 percent in 2009. The other areas identified by 11–13 percent are student behaviour, what children learn, how children learn, and uniforms or dress standards. These areas are of more interest to parents whose child attends a decile 1–2 school than parents whose child attends a mid- or high-decile school.

Many more parents seem to have taken part in school activities in 2012 than in 2009. Seventy-four percent indicate participation in one or more of the 16 areas we mentioned, or another area, compared with 48 percent in 2009. Thirty-seven percent have responded to school surveys compared with 22 percent in 2009, suggesting that schools are seeking more parental views, which is consistent with the emphasis on school-based curriculum coming from the New Zealand Curriculum. Attending sports (34 percent), contributing to fundraising (28 percent), attending school performances (21 percent), coaching sports (16 percent), and going on school trips (13 percent) are the other main ways parents took part in secondary school activities in 2012. Parents whose child attends a decile 1–2 school are less likely to mention sports, fundraising or attending school performances.

Parents find out about education primarily from their networks (friends, 52 percent, and family, 43 percent). Internet searches are used by 52 percent, compared with 44 percent in 2009). There has been some decline in other sources of information about education in general. In 2012, newspapers are used as a source of information about education by 53 percent of parents of secondary students, compared with 61 percent in 2009; books are used by 22 percent, compared with 28 percent in 2009; and magazines by 16 percent, compared with 21 percent in 2009). TV (37 percent) and radio (20 percent) are used by much the same proportion in 2012 as in 2009. Information from government agencies about education has also held steady as a source for parents of secondary students, with 28 percent mentioning ERO, and 22 percent, the Ministry of Education.

Māori whānau and Pasifika parents are most likely to mention family as a main source of information about education in general. Asian parents draw on fewer personal networks of family and friends, and less on radio. Parents whose child attends a decile 1–2 school are most likely to mention family and books, and parents whose child attends a decile 9–10 school, most likely to mention ERO.

Parent understanding and support for NCEA

NCEA began a decade ago, so it is not the same as the qualifications system that parents of secondary school students know from their own experience. NCEA offers students the opportunity for a more customized approach, and it involves more internal assessment. It has also undergone some fine tuning since it began. It is not surprising, but still ground for concern, that parent confidence that they have an understanding of how NCEA works in general is still not high. Only 62 percent of parents think they have this understanding, 23 percent are unsure, and 13 percent think they do not understand NCEA. General understanding is higher among those with a child in Years 11–13, when students usually tackle NCEA assessments (70 percent compared with 50 percent of those with a child in Years 9–10). But only 53 percent of those with a child in Years 11–13 think they understand how literacy and numeracy credits are determined for NCEA (the method was recently changed), with 29 percent unsure, and 16 percent clear that they do not understand how these key credits are gained.

In 2012, slightly more than half of parents of students at secondary schools are supportive of NCEA (54 percent, up from 45 percent in 2009) see it as a valuable record of student learning (55 percent, up from 42 percent in 2009), and a credible qualification in the wider community (51 percent, up from 42 percent in 2009). Between 11 and 12 percent of parents have negative views of NCEA. The rest are unsure. Parents of Year 9–10 students are more likely to be unsure than parents of Year 11–13 students. Parents with a child at a decile 1–2 school are the most positive about the NCEA qualification.

Parents of students in Years 11–13 in 2012 or 2011 are generally proud of their child's NCEA achievements (78 percent), and positive about the changes to NCEA: 71 percent say their

child usually strives for merit or excellence in assessments (11 percent are unsure, and 16 percent disagree), and 64 percent think that course endorsements are a helpful way to keep students motivated, with 28 percent unsure, and only 5 percent disagreeing.

Parent views on whether students now have too much responsibility for NCEA choices are mixed: 24 percent think they do, 43 percent are unsure, and 31 percent think they don't.

Parent views of issues facing their child's school

Parents identify fewer issues facing their child's secondary school than those working in schools or governing them. (A comparison of the "top 10 issues facing their school" for all four groups surveyed is given in Appendix 3).

Student behaviour heads the "top 10" issues for parents, identified by 38 percent. Funding followed (34 percent). Between a third to a quarter of parents identify motivating students, keeping good teachers, attracting good teaching staff, student achievement and the quality of teaching as issues facing their school. Large classes and providing the subjects students want are each identified by 23 percent of parents, and 18 percent identify student bullying.

Parents of students attending decile 1–2 schools are more likely than others to identify funding, keeping good teaching staff, providing subjects that students want, student bullying, parental support for student learning, community support, and Māori and Pasifika student achievement as issues facing their school. They are least likely to mention large classes.

Parents' identification of issues facing their school may be filtered by their own concerns and knowledge. Thus 31 percent of Māori parents identify Māori student achievement (compared with 7 percent of parents overall), and 39 percent of Pasifika parents identify Pasifika student achievement (compared with 5 percent of parents overall).

Appendix 1: Characteristics and representativeness of respondent groups

Principals and trustees

All secondary schools were sent surveys for principals and trustees. The responses from principals and trustees were broadly representative of the overall demographic profile of New Zealand secondary schools. The tables that follow show some under-representation of decile 1–2 schools and state-integrated schools, and some over-representation of schools with rolls of 750 or more when responses are compared with the national profile of secondary schools.

Table 5 **Profile of responses by decile**

Decile grouping	New Zealand secondary schools (*n* = 322 schools) %	Principals (*n* = 177) %	Trustees (*n* = 290) %
1–2 low	15	11	9
3–8 mid	67	70	71
9–10 high	17	19	20

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 6 **Profile of responses by school size**

Size	New Zealand secondary schools (*n* = 322 schools) %	Principals (*n* = 177) %	Trustees (*n* = 290) %
100–249	9	7	7
250–399	15	14	13
400–749	31	31	30
750–1499	33	36	36
1500+	12	12	15

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 7 **Profile of responses by school type**

School type	New Zealand secondary schools (*n* = 322 schools) %	Principals (*n* = 177) %	Trustees (*n* = 290) %
Urban	93	93	93
Rural	7	7	7

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 8 **Profile of responses by school authority**

Authority	New Zealand secondary schools (*n* = 322 schools) %	Principals (*n* = 177) %	Trustees (*n* = 290) %
State	78	81	81
State integrated	22	19	19

NB. Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Teachers

Teachers were emailed a link to their national survey, which they completed online. We asked them at the end of the survey to give us their school decile and size, so we could see how representative the response was in relation to key school characteristics. Not all teachers answered these questions.

The number of teachers a school has is roll-dependent. We therefore compared the proportion of teachers responding in relation to the proportion of students in the schools in each decile at the national level. This comparison indicates that the teacher responses are reasonably representative in terms of school decile, with a small over-representation of teachers in decile 1–3 schools, and a small under-representation of teachers in decile 8–9 schools.

Table 9 **Teacher responses in relation to national student population by decile**

Decile	Responding teachers %	Student population (*n* = 322 schools) Students (No.)	Students %
1	5	10877	4
2	6	17287	6
3	9	16195	6
4	9	26646	10
5	11	30928	12
6	13	36065	14
7	11	28663	11
8	12	38686	14
9	10	34509	13
10	9	27211	10
Unknown	6	-	-

Parents

The 2012 NZCER national secondary survey parent sample was based on a sample of 32 schools, randomly selected to provide a good cross-section of schools within three decile groups (1–2, 3–8, 9–10), and roll size within the decile groups. The sample is not intended to be representative of all schools and parents, but to provide sufficient numbers of parents with different social characteristics, such as ethnicity and qualification levels, to check for differences in experiences and views, and to provide a comparison with previous NZCER national surveys, so that we can track trends over time.

To gauge how representative the response was in terms of the school deciles included in the cross-section of schools, we compared the number of surveys sent to each school where we had responses with the number of surveys returned. There is no decile 10 school in the parent school sample, since the random selection of schools within the three decile groups did not result in the inclusion of a decile 10 school.

There is no clear pattern in the response rates related to school decile. Numbers are higher for high-decile schools because they are generally larger than other schools.

Table 10 **Profile of responses by decile**

Decile	Parent surveys sent to school (No.)	Parent surveys returned (No.)	Response Rate %
1	171	31	18
2	285	69	24
3	537	118	22
4	599	108	18
5	157	49	31
6	342	101	30
7	426	83	19
8	1395	333	24
9	1674	585	35

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' ethnicity, though there is not a one-to-one match (some families have more children than others). The table below 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 and Asian parents than for others.

Table 11 **Parent responses by ethnicity and national roll data for secondary students**

Ethnicity	Parents (*n* = 1477) %	National roll data for secondary students (*n* = 272,680) %
Pākehā/European	69	55
Māori	12	19
Asian	6	6
Pasifika	5	10
Other	7	10

Parents with qualifications are more likely to return surveys related to education. The table below shows the education qualifications of those who responded to this survey.

Table 12 **Parent responses by highest education qualification**

Qualification	Parents (*n* = 1477) %
None	8
5th, 6th form or higher school certificate	25
Trade or pre-vocational certificate	8
Technician's or advanced trade certificate or national diploma	4
Undergraduate or national diploma or certificate	16
Bachelor's degree	19
Postgraduate degree or diploma	17

No recent comparable national figures are readily available, but a comparison of 2006 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 percent without a qualification, compared with 8 percent in this survey, and 12 percent with a Bachelor's degree as their highest qualification, compared with 19 percent in this survey.

Appendix 2: Principal and trustee views of the role of local Ministry of Education offices

Figure 9 **Principal views of the role of the local Ministry of Education office (*n* = 177)**

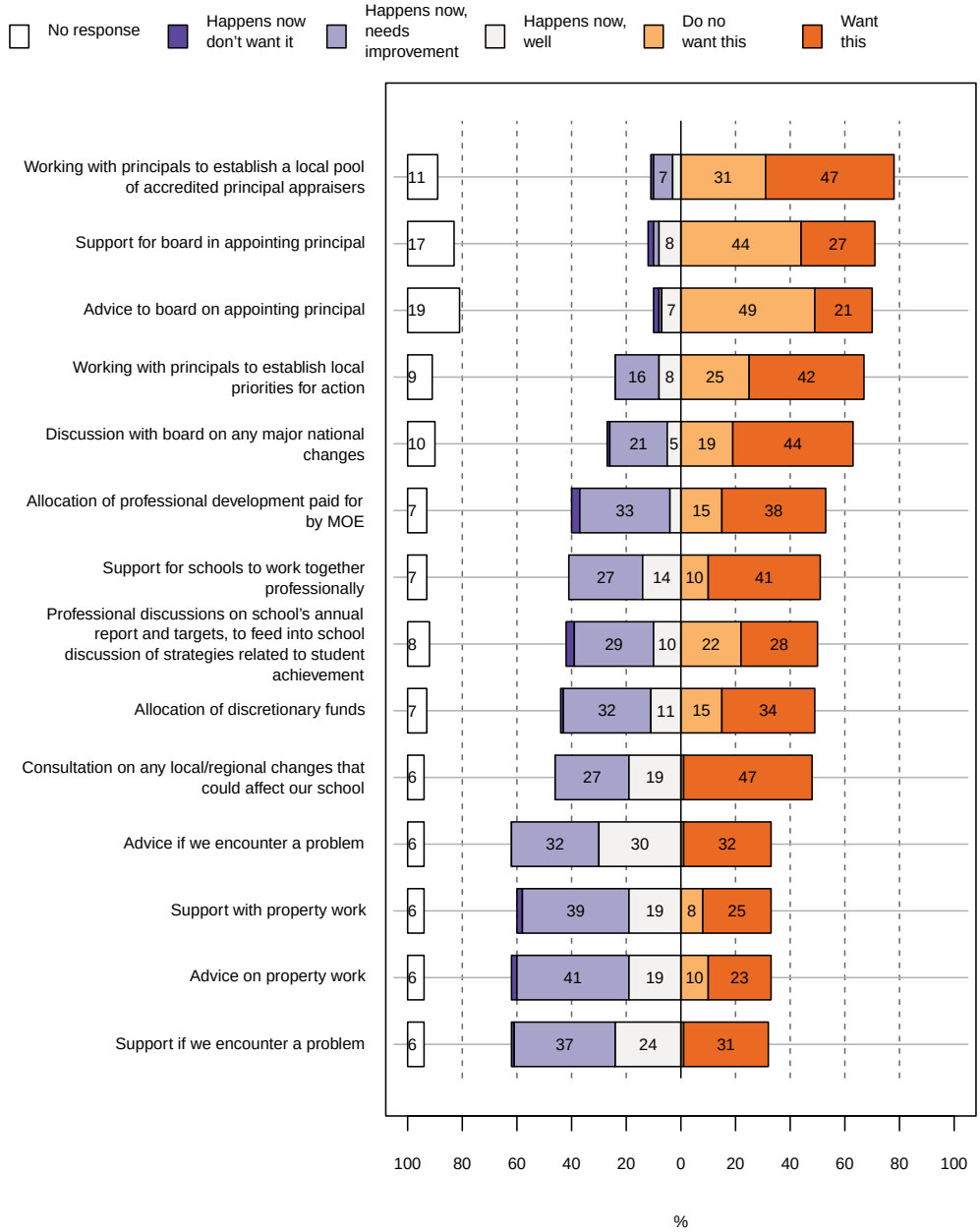
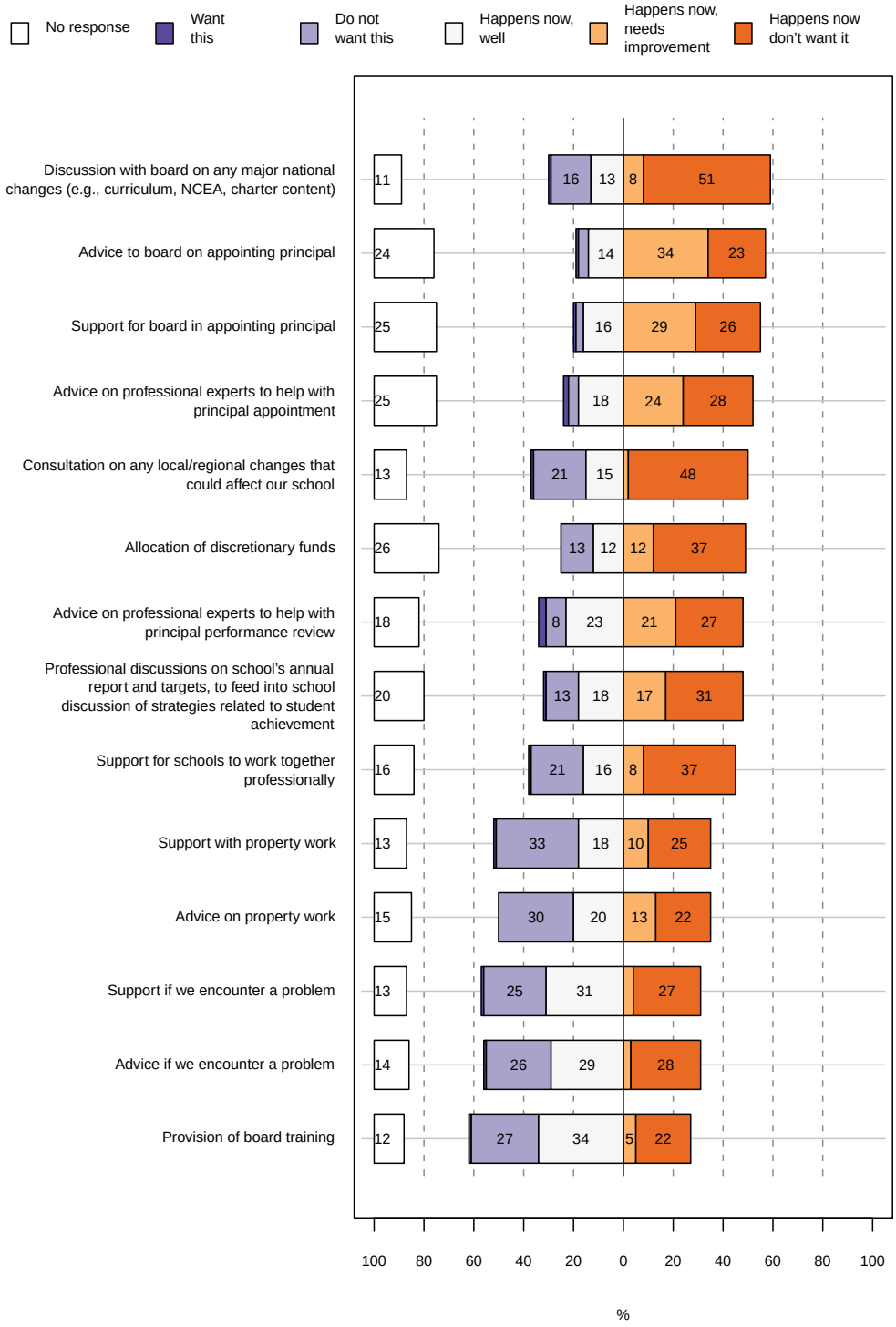


Figure 10 **Trustee views of the role of the local Ministry of Education office (*n* = 289)**



Appendix 3: Issues facing their schools

Funding and ICT equipment and Internet access are high on the set of major issues that survey participants identified as facing their school, whatever their role. Māori student achievement, and achievement in general, are both issues identified at much the same level across roles.

Professional staff are much more conscious of issues relating to NCEA workload and the dominant role of assessment in the curriculum. They are also more conscious than trustees of difficulty accessing good quality professional development, and working with current staffing levels. Teachers and trustees were both more likely to identify issues around student behaviour, motivation, and parental support for learning than were principals.

Table 13 **Top 10 issues facing their school**

Issue	**Principals (*n* =177) %**	**Teachers (*n*=1266) %**	**Trustees (*n* = 289) %**	**Parents (*n* = 1477) %**
Funding	76	60	68	35
Adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access	57	54	43	*11*
Quarterly funding of schools	55	*22*	*21*	*not asked*
NCEA workload	49	58	26	*not asked*
Assessment driving the curriculum	47	48	*12*	*6*
Getting good quality professional development	40	37	*14*	*not asked*
Māori student achievement	40	36	39	*7*
Property	38	*32*	40	*14*
Student achievement	37	*34*	40	26
Staffing levels	35	*35*	*12*	*12*
Motivating students	*35*	48	*20*	33
Student behaviour	*26*	44	27	38
Large class sizes	*20*	37	*16*	23
Parent support for their children's learning	*25*	36	29	*13*

Note:Figures in ordinary print are the "top 10" issues for each group; figures in italics give the proportions for issues that were not in each group's "top 10". All survey participants were asked, "What do you think are the major issues facing your school, if any?", and asked to tick all the items that applied, from a list of 33. Only 2 percent of trustees and teachers, and 1 percent of principals did not identify any issue; however 16 percent of parents did not identify an issue. Trustees on average identified between 5 and 6 issues each, teachers and principals between 8 and 9, and parents around 3 issues.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