Secondary principals' perspectives from NZCER's 2022 National Survey of Schools

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NZCER
Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa

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Contents

Tables

Figures

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

The long-running National Survey of Schools project is part of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research's (NZCER's) Te Pae Tawhiti programme of research, funded through the Ministry of Education.

NZCER has run a national survey of secondary schools every 3 years since 2003. As part of the 2022 National Survey of Secondary Schools, we invited all English-medium secondary school principals (state and state-integrated) to complete our surveys.

This year we trialled a different approach to surveying principals, where we sent out three shorter surveys to all principals, where each third completed only one survey. The three samples cover all English-medium secondary principals (state and state-integrated), and, together, the three surveys allowed us to retain the comprehensive nature of our national survey, while reducing survey completion time for principals. Of all 374 principals we invited to take part in the survey, we received a total of 154 principal responses across our three surveys, giving a response rate of 41%.

The report covers all the questions asked of principals, organised in four areas:

1. Optimism, supporting Māori students, and supporting Pacific students
2. Governance, system-wide interactions, and support
3. Teaching, learning, and wellbeing
4. Equity, curriculum, and working experiences.

Key highlights that stood out to us were:

- Overall, principals reported feeling optimistic and supported by good systems and committed staff (72%–88%), but only 55% had a clear idea of upcoming initiatives or policy changes that impact how they work.
- Most principals (81%–88%) indicated that their school positively supported Māori students through a range of practices. However, there is an opportunity for further involvement of whānau in school activities and initiatives related to Māori language (45%) and ensuring more students have regular access to positive Māori community role models (64%).
- Overall, principals indicated relatively lower levels of support for Pacific students (19%–57%) compared to that provided for Māori students (64%–88%).
- Student data play a key role in guiding boards of trustees' decision making (73%–92%), but only 38% said this was the case for Pacific students' achievement data.
- About half of principals commented on the collaborative nature of Kāhui Ako and their positive impact on relationships, while also asking for improvement in their structure, and additional support to enhance outcomes.
- There was in principle support for the role of Ministry of Education regional staff at Te Mahau (79%–85%), with some reservations: only 44%–47% of principals said that regional staff at Te Mahau help them tackle some of the wider issues for schools in their area, and give them some new and useful ideas.

- Many principals indicated that they had received helpful advice from Ministry of Education regional offices and NZSTA (83%–80%), but fewer agreed they received helpful advice from the Ministry of Education national office and Teaching Council (35%–31%).
- Interactions with ERO, including ERO reviews, were positively rated by 59%–78% of secondary principals.
- General support for mixed ability grouping was reported by 71%–75% of secondary principals, with most principals (77%–94%) reporting timetabling practices that enable students to realise their future career goals or aspirations.
- Most principals changed the ways they work because of COVID-19, specifically offering more opportunities to learn online (74%), increased online communication with parents and whānau, and replacing some assemblies or staff meetings with digital information (54%).
- Providing support for vulnerable students, including those with mental health issues, is identified as the top-ranking issue facing schools. While this is a concern, it was pleasing to see nearly all principals (98%) indicated that their school had well-embedded plans and processes for identifying and acting on students' social or mental health concerns. About three-quarters of principals indicated their teachers were trained to recognise and act on mental health warning signs.
- Recruiting quality teachers is another top issue reported by 71% of principals, with particular difficulties in recruiting maths, te reo Māori, and science teachers.
- Too much is being asked of schools (76% thought so), and principals would rather have more time to focus on educational leadership (80%), and more time to reflect, read, and be innovative (73%).
- In principle, there is support for the new Equity Index (EQI) system and associated funding changes (60%–73%), but reservations as to whether it is likely to challenge stigma and improve educational outcomes for students who face socioeconomic barriers to achievement (only 31%–43% thought it would).
- Actions to combat climate change are emerging (40%–60%), but not widespread. Only 20% of schools had goals, objectives, or actions related to sustainability or climate change as part of their school charter, strategic plan, or annual goals.
- There was low support for National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) changes and the review of achievement standards (26%–44%), and schools are in the early stages of implementing Aotearoa New Zealand Histories in their local curriculum: most are either getting started (28%) or developing their understandings and relationships (42%).
- Most principals enjoy their job (80%), but only 9% thought their workload is manageable. Twenty-two percent thought their high workload prevented them from doing justice to their school.
- Just over half (53%–60%) were positive about their building conditions and their suitability for teaching and learning.

1. Introduction

NZCER has run a national survey of secondary schools every 3 years since 2003. For the 2022 National Survey of Secondary Schools, we surveyed a national sample of teachers, randomly chosen from a stratified sample of Years 9–13 and Years 7–13 English-medium secondary schools, and the report was published last year.[1,2] We also invited all English-medium secondary school principals to complete our surveys, which is the focus of this report.

1.1 Methodology

Previous feedback from schools suggested that our paper-based principal survey was too long to complete, with some principals preferring a move to an online survey platform to reduce time spent on completing and returning their surveys. This year we trialled a different approach to surveying principals that included:

- sending three shorter surveys to all secondary school principals (state and state-integrated), where each third complete only one survey that took no longer than 10–15 minutes to complete. The three samples cover all English-medium secondary principals (state and state-integrated), and together, the three surveys allowed us to retain the comprehensive nature of our national survey, while reducing survey completion time for principals
- moving the surveys online
- working with the PPTA to distribute the surveys on our behalf.[3]

1.1.1 Survey structure and data collection

Each survey included a section with core questions that were included in all surveys, and additional areas that were different for each survey, as shown below in Table 1.

TABLE 1   **Description of the three principal surveys**

Survey	Core areas (included in all surveys)	Additional areas	Number of responses
Survey 1	Optimism and the year ahead, supporting Māori students, and supporting Pacific students	Governance, system-wide interactions, and support	56
Survey 2		Teaching, learning, wellbeing	50
Survey 3		Equity, curriculum, and working experiences	48

1 https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/Teacher%20perspectives%202021-national-survey-secondary-schools
2 We decided not to go ahead with surveying parents and whānau this year to reduce burden on schools.
3 We used the PPTA's national database to draw the three samples (stratified by decile). Each sample was provided with a separate link that took them to one of three surveys to complete.

Data collection took place at the end of 2022.[4] Of all 374 principals[5] we invited to take part in the survey, we received a total of 154 principal responses across our three surveys, giving a response rate of 41%. This is slightly lower than the response rate in 2018 (53%) but is consistent with the average response rate of other online surveys in published research.[6]

1.2 Reading the report

This report is organised into the following sections:
- Section 2 presents findings from the core areas: optimism and the year ahead; supporting Māori students; and supporting Pacific students.
- Section 3 presents findings around governance, system-wide interactions, and support.
- Section 4 presents findings around teaching, learning, and wellbeing.
- Section 5 presents findings around equity, curriculum, and working experiences.

Hypothesis testing[7] was conducted for closed survey questions that were asked across the three surveys to examine if there were statistically significant associations between principal views and experiences, and major school and principal characteristics (school decile, school size, school type, years of principal experience, and principal ethnicity). Only a small number of associations were found to be statistically significant, and only with school size. These are reported in the main body of the report.

When the same items were asked of principals in the 2018 national survey, we report any marked changes (i.e., over 10 percentage points). This provides some indication of whether principal views have changed over time; however, care is needed when interpreting these differences given our new sampling approach this year.

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4   The ongoing effects of COVID-19 led us to postpone our survey of principals to term 4, 2022.
5   This total is our estimate for all English-medium secondary principals (state and state-integrated) in the country, based on both the Education Count's website and the PPTA database.
6   For a discussion on average response rates of online surveys, see meta-analysis by Wu et al., 2022: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2451958822000409
7   Chi-square tests for independence were used throughout the report. False Discovery Rate was applied to account for the inflated Type 1 error rate and to ensure we only report on results that are both statistically significant and meaningful.

2. Optimism, supporting Māori students, and supporting Pacific students

This section reports on findings from the core items included in all three surveys. These items were organised under three headings:

1. Principals' optimism and the year ahead
2. Supporting Māori students
3. Supporting Pacific students.

All 154 principals responded to these questions, although completion rates varied. Most items received 136–146 responses.

2.1 Principals' optimism and the year ahead

For the first time, the 2022 national survey included items that probed principals' reflections on the year ahead and their level of confidence in the school's response to potential changes (Figure 1). A majority of principals (88%) indicated a positive belief that the school has well-established systems and plans in place to address potential disruptions to teaching and learning in 2023. They also felt supported by staff who are dedicated to making a positive impact for all students and their communities (88% agreement). Principals displayed a slightly lower level of agreement that they were optimistic about the year ahead (72%), with 14% responding neutrally and 14% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Additionally, 69% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident in tackling new challenges or changes that the school may face.

An item that sought principals' views about upcoming initiatives, or policy changes that could impact the school and their work, received more varied responses. Just over half of the principals (55%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had a clear idea of these changes, while 21% responded neutrally, and 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In summary, principals demonstrated higher levels of optimism and confidence when it came to schoolwide factors such as established systems, plans, and supportive staff. Their attitudes towards upcoming changes that originated outside the school were more varied.

FIGURE 1   **Principal views of the year ahead (*n* = 146)**
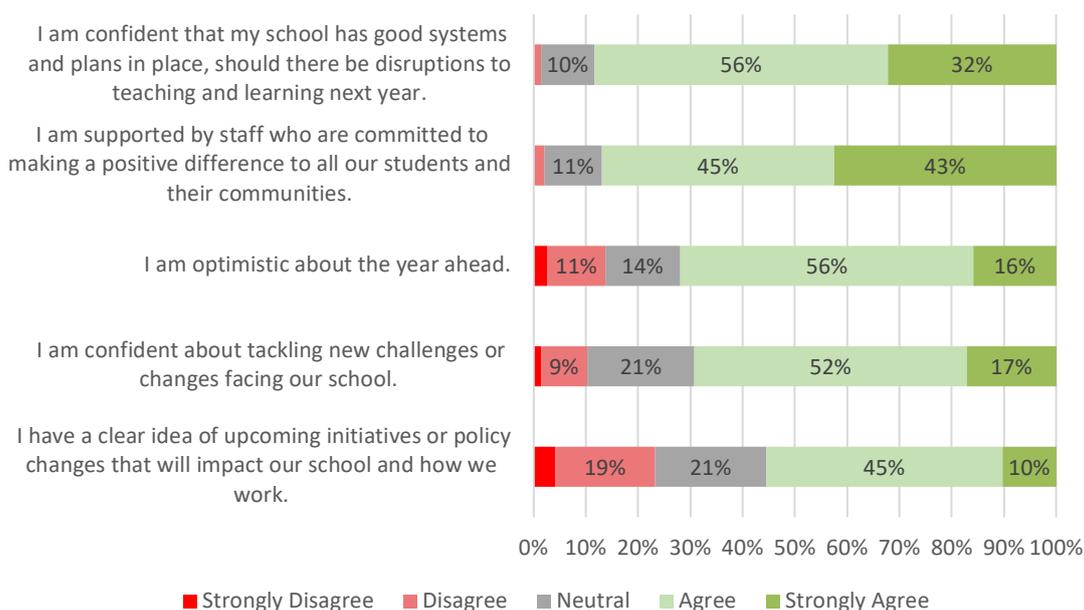
2.2 Supporting Māori students

Principals responded to questions about their schools' support to allow Māori learners to experience success as Māori, support for use of te reo Māori, and potential interactions with local hapū and/or iwi.

Figure 2 below shows responses to five items that described potential forms of support for Māori learners in a school. The majority of principals (88%) agreed or strongly agreed that there are clear schoolwide goals for the academic achievement of Māori students. A similar proportion (85%) agreed or strongly agreed that te reo Māori and tikanga Māori are practised at both school and classroom level and 83% agreed or strongly agreed that they actively explore ways to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi in their work. Only slightly fewer (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that appropriate and safe pathways/processes were in place for Māori students and their whānau to raise important issues. Just over half (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that students have regular access to positive Māori role models.

FIGURE 2   **Supporting Māori students (*n* = 139)**
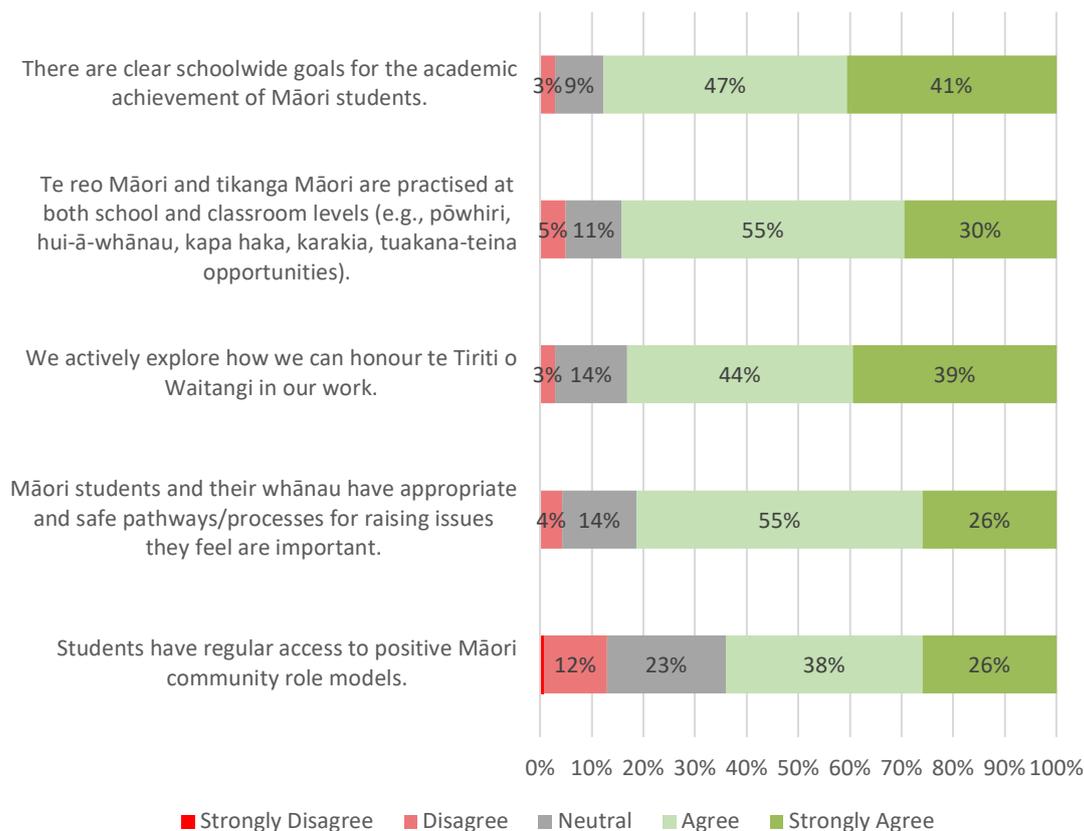
Figure 3 shows principals' responses to four items that described opportunities for Māori language learning in the school. Nearly all principals (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that they provide or fund staff professional learning and development (PLD) for learning te reo Māori. Similarly, most principals agreed or strongly agreed that they actively promote te reo Māori in the school and local community (92%), and they have a plan for te reo Māori teaching and learning (90%). However, just under half agreed or strongly agreed (45%) that the school involved whānau in Māori language planning and programmes. A relatively large proportion of principals (34%) responded neutrally to this item, while 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

We found a statistically significant association between principal views on te reo Māori teaching and learning plans, and school size: the larger the school, the more likely principals agreed or strongly agreed that their school has a plan for te reo Māori teaching and learning.

FIGURE 3   **Supporting te reo Māori teaching and learning (*n* = 139)**
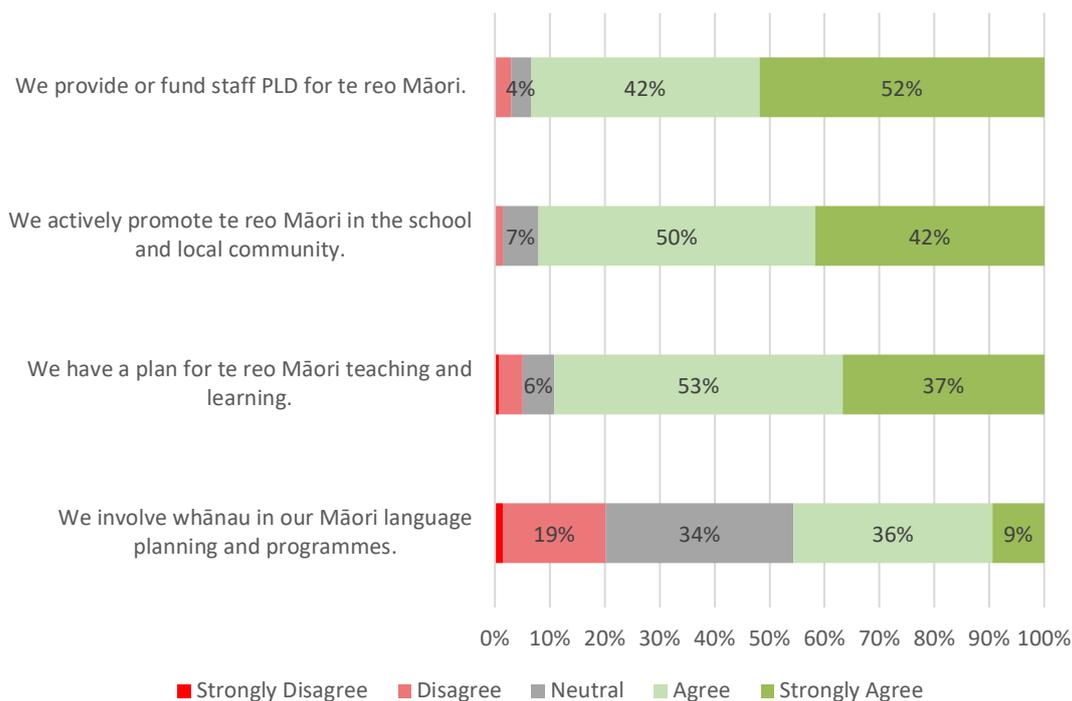
Figure 4 shows principals' responses to eight tick-box items that described potential relationships between the school and local hapū and/or iwi. Three-quarters of principals (74%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school actively seeks local hapū and/or iwi guidance on how best to provide support for Māori students. Just over half (54%) indicated that hapū and/or iwi provide PLD for the school, and just under half (48%) indicated that the local curriculum has been developed with input from local hapū and/or iwi.

Fewer principals indicated that they: included hapū and/or iwi in their review and planning (43%); had hapū and/or iwi representation on the school board (42%); shared and discussed Māori student engagement and achievement data with hapū and/or iwi (40%); or received student support from hapū and/or iwi (40%). A small proportion of respondents (7%) indicated that they have no relationship with local hapū and/or iwi.

FIGURE 4   **School relationships with local hapū and/or iwi (*n* = 139)**
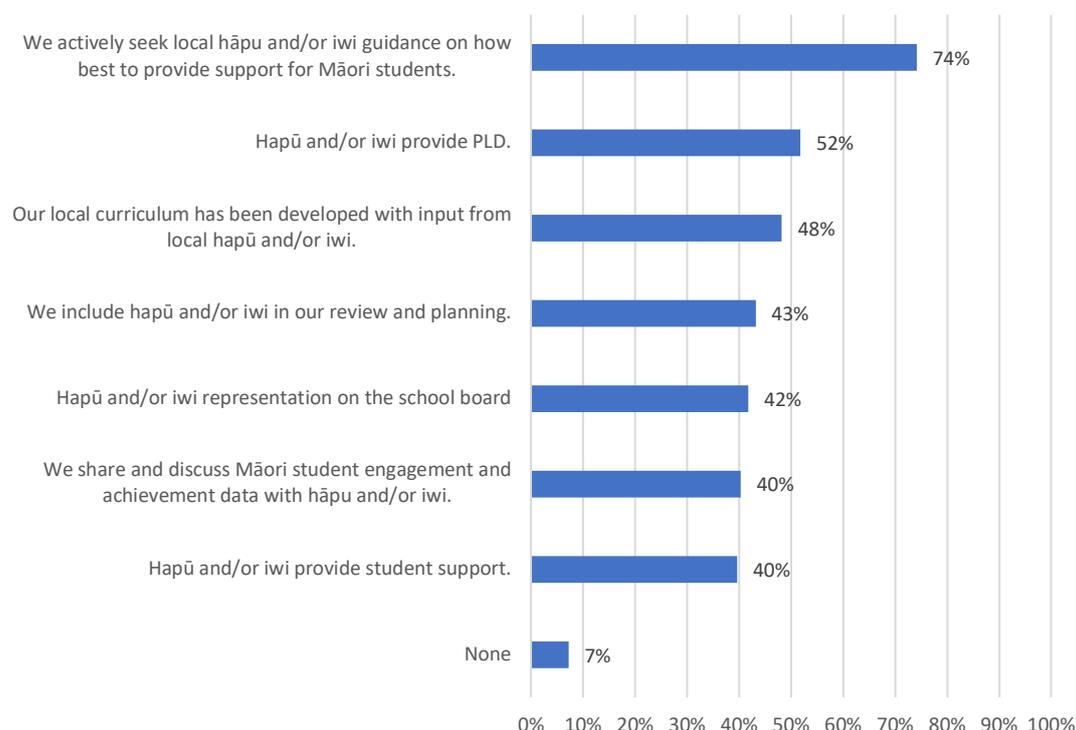
2.3 **Supporting Pacific students**

Principals also responded to questions about support for Pacific learners (Figure 4). Just over half the principals agreed or strongly agreed that: they provide opportunities for Pacific students and families to support each other (57%); Pacific students and their families have appropriate and safe pathways/processes for raising issues they feel are important (56%, compared with 81% for Māori students and their whānau); and that there are clear schoolwide goals for the academic achievement of Pacific students (54%, compared with 88% for Māori students).

A smaller proportion of principals agreed or strongly agreed that students have regular access to positive Pacific community role models (40%, compared with 64% for Māori students). Fewer principals still agreed or strongly agreed that: Pacific cultural values, identities, and languages are incorporated in both schoolwide and classroom practices (30%); or that students have access to a localised curriculum developed in relationship with local Pacific communities (19%). Notably, 40% or principals gave a neutral response to this last item, and 48% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

We found statistically significant associations between principal views on supporting Pacific students, and school size: the larger the school, the more likely principals agreed or strongly agreed that:
- they provide opportunities for Pacific students and families to support each other
- students have regular access to positive Pacific community role models
- students have access to a localised curriculum developed in relationship with local Pacific communities.

FIGURE 5   **Supporting Pacific students (*n* = 136)**
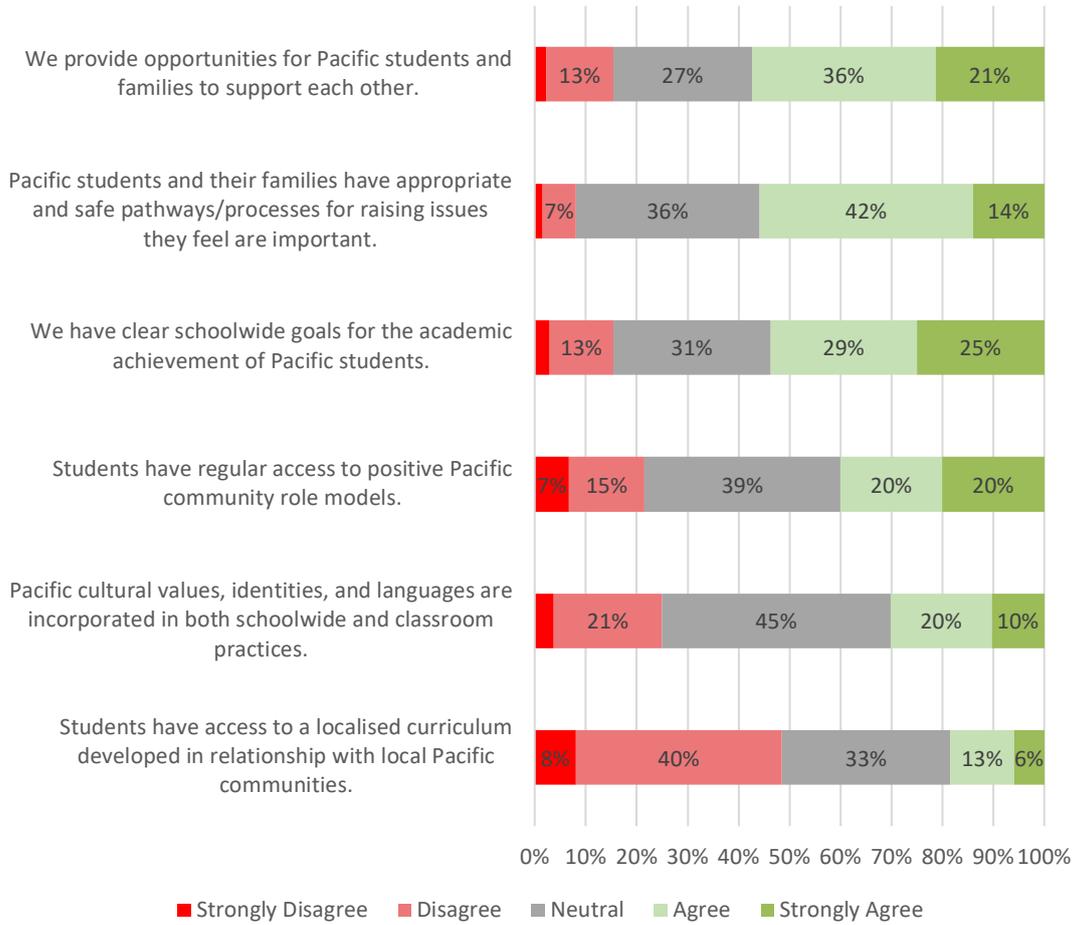
3. Governance, system-wide interactions, and support

Fifty-six principals completed Survey 1, which covered six areas:

1. The board of trustees
2. Interactions with other schools—Kāhui Ako
3. Interactions with the Ministry of Education
4. Interactions with six government-funded agencies
5. Access to non-Ministry of Education-funded support
6. Support for students' career pathways.

Completion rates varied, with most items receiving 47–51 responses.

3.1 The board of trustees

Principals responded to questions about their board of trustees (Figure 6).

Most principals (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that the board regularly scrutinises school performance. The second-highest ranking item also garnered strong support: 88% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that achievement data plays a key role in the board's decision making for students who require learning support (up from 66% in 2018).

Seventy-three percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that Māori student achievement data played a significant role in the board's decision making about staffing and resources, compared with 62% in 2018. A new item in the 2022 survey probed whether the board is representative of the community and incorporates diverse perspectives, including Māori, Pacific, and other backgrounds: 63% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

As in 2018, fewer principals perceived that Pacific students' achievement data played a role in the board's decision making (36% agreed or strongly agreed, similarly to 37% in 2018). Half the principals (49%) gave a neutral response to this item, suggesting this could be an area for boards to strengthen.

FIGURE 6   **The role of student data in board decision making (*n* = 51)**
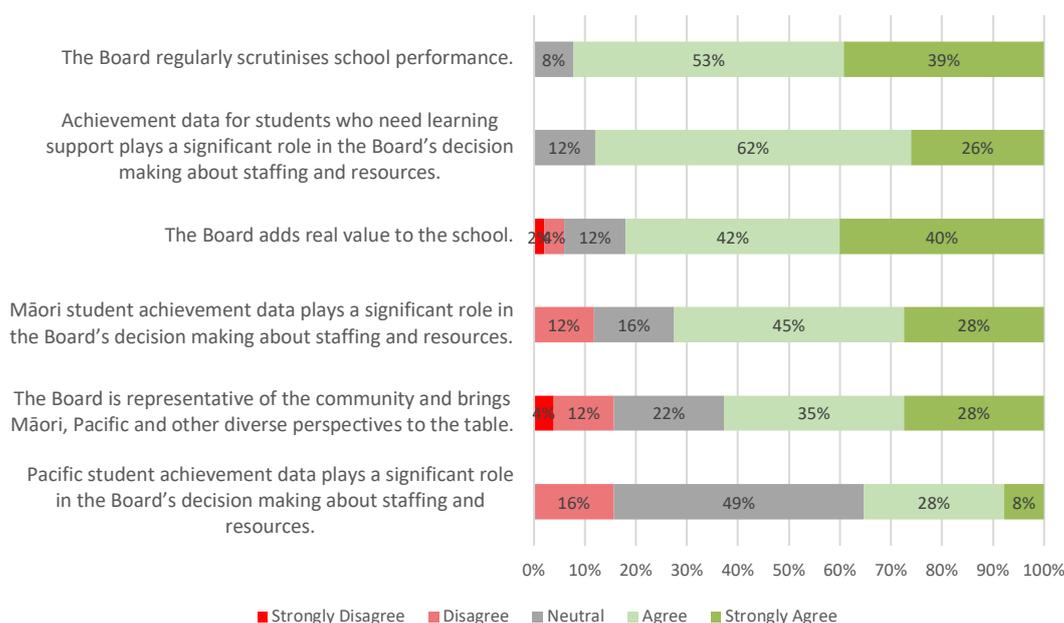
3.2 Interactions with other schools—Kāhui Ako

Seven items probed principals' perspectives on their involvement in Kāhui Ako, also known as Communities of Learning. Kāhui Ako developed in mid-2015 as a significant component of a policy named *Investing in Educational Success*.[8] This initiative aimed to leverage the collective knowledge within each school and promote the sharing of student information as they progress to higher education levels. The schools within each Kāhui Ako work together to identify common challenges they are facing and collaborate towards enhancing teaching and learning outcomes.

The 2015 National Survey[9] explored principals' expectations of Kāhui Ako. At that time, around two-thirds of principals (63%) expressed interest in their school becoming part of a Kāhui Ako, while an additional quarter remained uncertain. By 2018, most (82%) of the principals responding to the survey were leading secondary schools that belonged to a Kāhui Ako. In the 2022 surveys, 86% of principals confirmed that their school belonged to a Kāhui Ako.

Figure 7 shows responses to the 2022 survey items about Kāhui Ako. Some of these items were also asked in 2018, allowing some comparisons to be made.

Sixty-eight percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that principals support each other more, that professional development with teachers from primary schools had been beneficial to teachers in the principal's secondary school (49%), and that schools now share responsibility for the learning success of all the students (42%) in the Kāhui Ako (Figure 7). Principal ratings of these items were similar in 2018.[10]

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8   In 2015, these were called Communities of Schools, and subsequently changed to Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako.
9   Previous NZCER national survey reports can be accessed online: https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey-schools
10 Note that the wording of this item was slightly changed. In 2018 it read "Sharing professional development with teachers from primary schools has been beneficial to teachers in this school."

By 2022, there were higher levels of agreement that schools now get better information about students coming in from primary/intermediate (51% agreement in 2022, up from 35% in 2018).

Three new statements were introduced to the 2022 survey, with a focus on how Kāhui Ako influence relationships and inter-school sharing. Around half the principals agreed or strongly agreed that: they have improved support for at-risk students (52%); they are working more closely with local hapū and/ or iwi (49%); and they are doing useful work on a shared local curriculum (49%).

FIGURE 7   **Changes in relationships and increased inter-school sharing, as a result of kāhui ako (*n* = 43)**
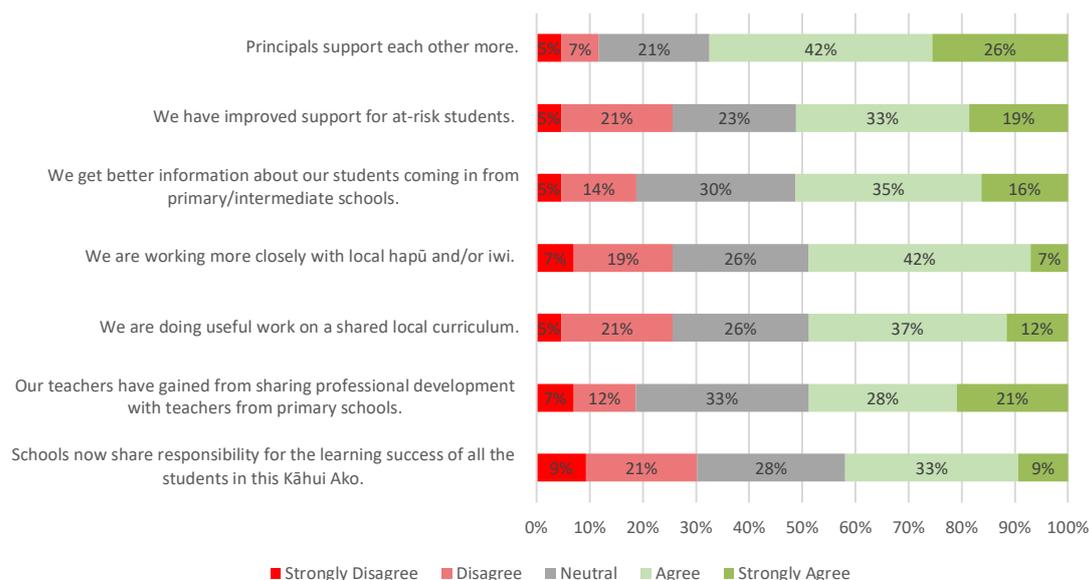
A total of 24 principals responded to an open question asking for comments about Kāhui Ako and what helps them be effective. Principals generally viewed Kāhui Ako as a positive initiative that promotes co-operation among schools, shifting the focus away from competition towards "working collaboratively".

> We are in a faith based Kāhui Ako, which helps us to be more aligned and there is less competition than in other models I have been involved with.

> Common focus/goals; sharing of resources; whole Kāhui Ako PLD (with iwi).

> Good people who are committed to collaboration. [We share] achievement objectives that are realistic and relevant to the Kāhui Ako's learning contexts.

> Commitment to not competing for students. Focus on wellbeing of students for the whole area, not status of our schools. Having a shared commitment to low SES [socioeconomic status] students.

Some principals highlighted the positive impact of Kāhui Ako on their relationships with mana whenua, indicating a positive outcome in terms of community engagement.

> Our community has worked closely as a Kāhui Ako for several years. It enables us great connections with our mana whenua. Which in turn enables the efficiencies of them being able to influence and contribute to all schools in our rohe in a manner that is sustainable for them.

However, some principals expressed reservations about the structure and operating model of Kāhui Ako. They expressed concern that some aspects of the model might compromise its effectiveness, particularly regarding the Across Schools Teacher positions.

The model/system doesn't work.

The system is deeply flawed for our school as we are the only secondary school in our Kāhui Ako … The Kāhui model is less relevant in an area such as Wellington city where all the feeder schools contribute to all the city schools. Our 2nd greatest feeder school is not even in our Kāhui Ako … Only 50% of our year 9 intake come from our Kāhui Ako feeder schools. Why not make one super-cluster for Wellington city which would have benefits for secondary and primary?

Our key feeder school isn't in our Kāhui Ako.

The structure is wrong. Within-school [lead] teachers make a difference, but the other levels should [be] removed, and the resource given to the schools, who would make far better use of it.

I am not sure that this is a resource that has truly lived [up] to its expectation. The key was about transitions. However, I feel each school accesses what they need and the challenge of transition is not met when there are no clear transition schools in place. We have no zones so a lot of the students do not progress to the secondary school in the Kāhui Ako.

Some principals believed that there is a need for additional external support and guidance to improve the outcomes of Kāhui Ako.

External support/guidance is required for many about Kāhui [Ako], from MOE [the Ministry of Education] or an appointed leader, to make sure they are setting goals and have clear action plans.

Lead principals need to be both relational and strategic in their use of information and data. Intentional.

3.3 Interactions with the Ministry of Education

Principals indicated the nature of their interactions with the Ministry of Education, or agencies funded by the Ministry, by responding to a tick-box list of possibilities. Table 2 displays the results and compares them to previous national surveys where this is possible. Note that finer grained possibilities for NZSTA support were provided in previous surveys, making it impossible to directly compare some data from those surveys with 2022.

TABLE 2   **MOE-funded support accessed by principals (2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2022)**

Ministry of Education-funded support	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %	2018 (n = 167) %	2022 (n = 51) %
NZSTA Advisory and Support Centre	*	*	*	*	84
NZSTA Regional adviser	*	*	*	*	51
Educational Leaders website	71	70	52	44	33
Beginning principals support	*	*	*	*	29
Leadership adviser (Evaluation Associates)	*	*	*	*	28
Sabbatical	*	33	30	29	18
Other	*	*	*	*	14
None	*	*	*	*	0

*Not asked

In 2022, consistent with 2015 and 2018, most principals accessed support provided through the NZSTA advisory and support centre (84%). Half of them accessed support from a NZSTA regional adviser (51%). A trend for declining use of the Educational Leaders website continued, down to 33% in 2022. Note, however, that this remains the third most frequently accessed form of support. Compared to the previous three surveys, when around a third of principals said they took sabbatical leave, just 18% said they did so in 2022. This could be related to the increased workload in schools (see Section 5.6) and the potential impacts of the pandemic over the past few years. Two new items were introduced in the 2022 survey: 29% of principals accessed beginning principals support and 28% were supported by a leadership adviser from Evaluation Associates.

Types of support mentioned in the "other" category included various supports that were largely not Ministry of Education-funded (e.g., SPANZ, LSM, media advisers, regional leaders).

Accessing support from Te Mahau

In 2021, the Ministry of Education established Te Mahau in response to the Tomorrows' Schools review. This new structure was designed to allow daily contact and support for schools from staff in Regional Ministry of Education offices.[11] A majority of principals (92%) indicated that they have had contact with regional staff at Te Mahau.

Six new items probed principals' perceptions about this contact (Figure 8). A majority of the 47 principals who had interacted with regional staff at Te Mahau (85%) agreed or strongly agreed that this support had been constructive, and that regional staff had responded promptly to them (81%). Seventy-nine percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the regional staff understood the school and supported them well.

Agreement levels were lower for items that described regional staff assistance in addressing wider issues faced by schools (47% agreed or strongly agreed that they had been helped to tackle these), or as a source of new and useful ideas (44% agreed or strongly agreed).

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11 https://temahau.govt.nz/about

FIGURE 8   **Principals' perceptions of contact with regional staff in Te Mahau (*n* = 47)**
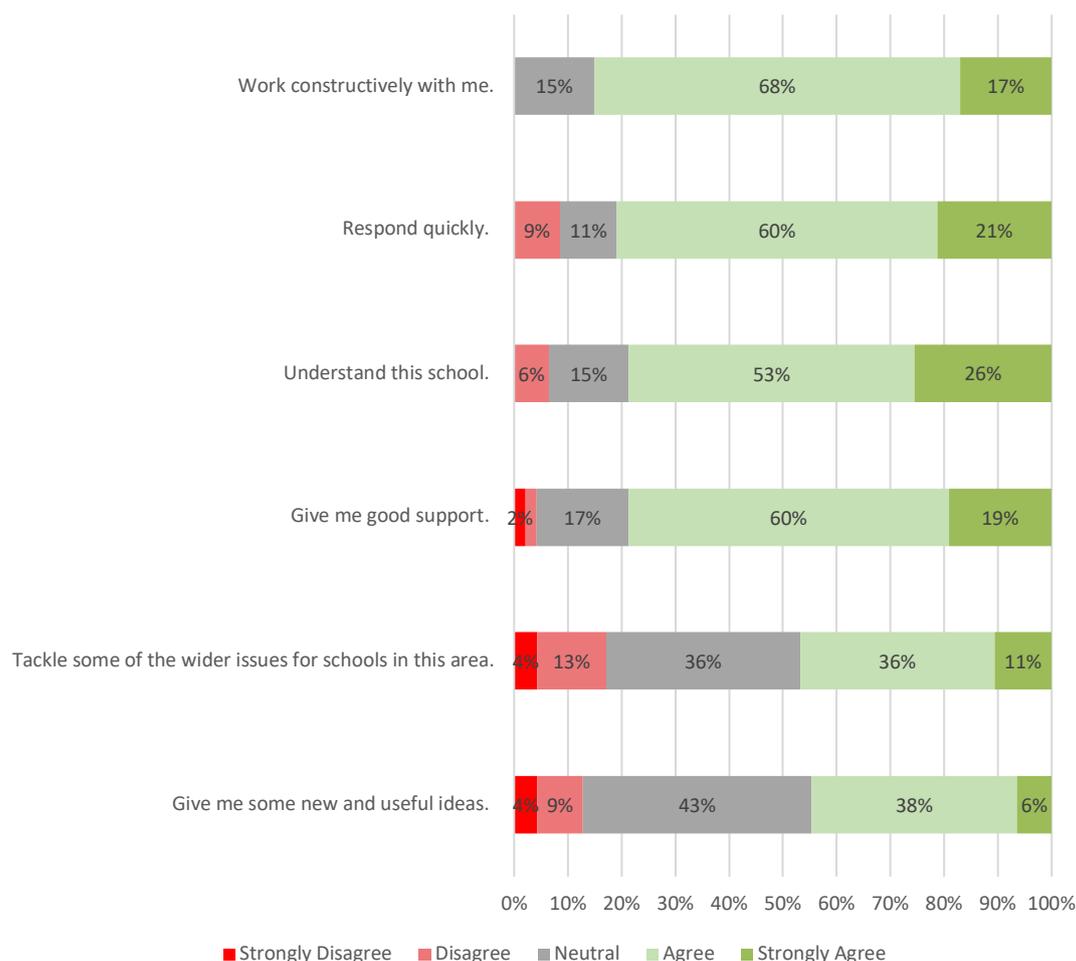
3.4 Interactions with six government-funded agencies

Secondary schools have access to a variety of advice and support to assist them in managing their legal and moral responsibilities in areas such as curriculum and assessment, managing finances and property, and supporting student wellbeing and welfare. This section presents principals' perceptions regarding the helpfulness of advice they have received from six different government-funded agencies when undertaking these responsibilities (Figure 9). A further set of items specifically probed their views concerning their interactions with ERO (Figures 10–11).

Congruent with responses to the items related to Te Mahau (Figure 8), a majority of principals (82%) agreed or strongly agreed that they received helpful advice from their regional office of the Ministry of Education. This was an increase on responses in 2018 (when 57% agreed or strongly agreed) and was the highest-ranking item in this set of statements. Following closely was agreement that the NZSTA provided effective support (80%, an increase from 59% in 2018). These substantive increases indicate that support from both agencies is now more widely perceived to be helpful, compared to the recent past.

Perceptions of the helpfulness of the other four agencies named in Figure 9 were more mixed: 69% of the principals agreed or strongly agreed that they received helpful advice from NZQA. This was a new

option introduced in the 2022 survey, so it cannot be compared with past responses. Over half agreed or strongly agreed that they received helpful support from ERO (61% agreement, increased from just over a third in 2018). Principals were less likely to perceive that they received helpful advice from the Ministry's national office (35% agreed or strongly agreed, similar to 2018). Advice from the Teaching Council was the least likely to be seen as helpful (31% agreed or strongly agreed, compared with 43% in 2018 when it was named the Education Council).

FIGURE 9 **Principals' level of agreement that they received helpful advice from government agencies (*n* = 50)**

Principals' views of their interactions with ERO

Most secondary principals were positive about their interactions with ERO, including ERO reviews (Figure 10). In 2022, 78% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the reviewer/s who undertook their school review were well-informed about secondary education.[12] Seventy percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that their last ERO reviewer/s understood the school.

Views were more mixed about how ERO's understanding of both secondary education in general and the school in particular translated into advice they could use. Sixty-seven percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that they had used ERO's school indicators to improve their own review and planning (compared with 78% in 2018). Sixty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that the last ERO review report provided valuable insights, and 59% agreed or strongly agreed that they made changes that improved teaching and learning in the school after the last ERO review (compared with 62% in 2018).

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12 Note the small change to the wording (previously "our last ERO reviewers understood secondary education").

FIGURE 10   **Principals' views of ERO and the use of ERO reviews and reports (*n* = 51)**
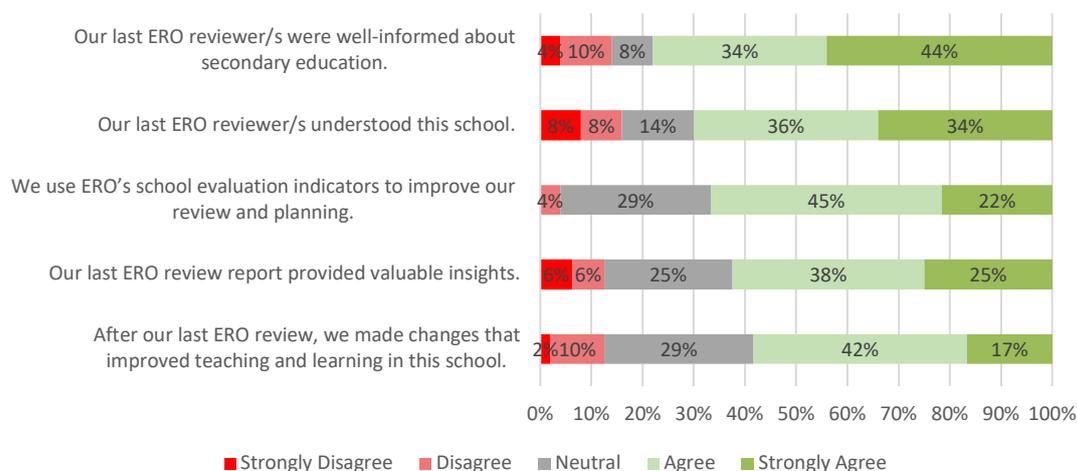
In 2021, ERO introduced a new approach to school evaluations, titled Te Ara Huarau. Rather than each evaluation being a one-off event, the new model envisages greater continuity so that each school receives advice that supports an improvement journey over time.[13]

Thirty-three of the 51 principals who responded to the sub-survey confirmed that ERO's new evaluation approach had been used in their schools, while 18 principals said it had not. Three new items probed perceptions of the change among these 33 principals. Seventy-two percent of them agreed or strongly agreed that the Te Ara Huarau approach is more useful for the school than the previous ERO approach. However, over half (54%) also agreed or strongly agreed that the new approach is more time consuming. Fewer perceived that the new approach had helped develop their own capacity for internal evaluation (48% agreement), and a further 36% were neutral.

FIGURE 11   **Principals' view of Te Ara Huarau in comparison with the former ERO approach (*n* = 33)**
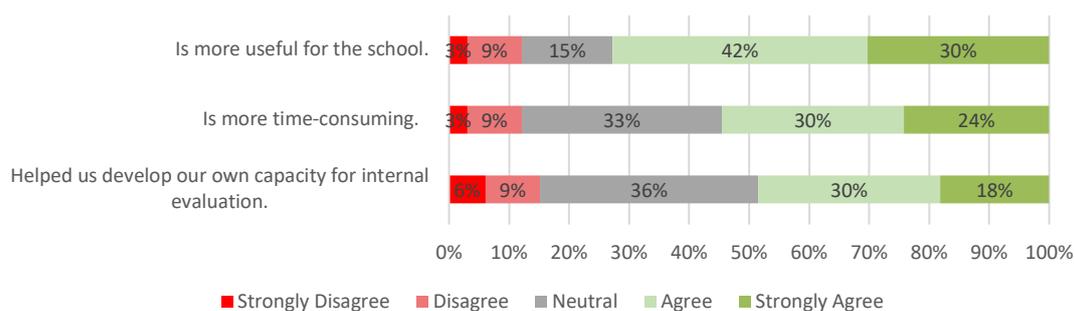
3.5 Access to non-Ministry of Education-funded support

One question provided a set of tick-box options that named sources of support not directly funded by the Ministry of Education. Table 3 shows the pattern of responses and compares this to previous national surveys where relevant.

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13 https://ero.govt.nz/how-ero-reviews/Te-Ara-Huarau

SPANZ has been the most frequently accessed non-Ministry of Education-funded support since 2015, despite a slight downward trend from 2018 to 2022 (63% in 2022, compared with 68% in 2018 and 59% in 2015). Among all the named forms of support, the PPTA was the only one to show a steady rise in use over the last few years (30% in 2015, 32% in 2018, to 43% in 2022).

TABLE 3 **Secondary principals' non-Ministry of Education-funded support for their role; 2015, 2018, and 2022**

Non-Ministry of Education-funded support	2015 (*n* = 182) %	2018 (*n* = 167) %	2022 (*n* = 49) %
SPANZ	59	68	63
PPTA	30	32	43
Private consultant/adviser—former principal	44	60	41
Private consultant/adviser—not former principal	30	29	18
Other	*	*	18
Postgraduate study	12	12	8
None	9	4	8

*Not asked

Overall, the long-term trend indicates a decline in principals' utilisation of non-Ministry of Education-funded support from 2018, returning to the level observed in 2015, with the exception of an increasing trend in the use of PPTA.

An "other" category was added to the question set in 2022, providing an opportunity for principals to indicate any other non-Ministry of Education-funded support they had received for their role. Nine principals (18%) made comments about other supports they had used. These included the Christian Principals Network, Māori education leaders, Principals' legal service, SPANZ lawyer, Secondary Principals' Council, [private] legal advice, supervisor/counsellor, external appraiser, and a regional principals association.

How principals support each other

Table 4 displays principals' professional contacts with other principals over the past few years. Regular attendance at meetings remains the most common form of professional contact, with 92% of principals engaging in this type of interaction in 2022. Two options for previous surveys were collapsed into one item in 2022 and this was the second most common form of contact between principals (82% of principals had engaged in discussions of common issues and mutual support). Attending conferences is another common form of professional contact: 74% had done so in 2022, a downward trend from 82% in 2018 and more in line with the level observed in 2015 (68%) and 2012 (73%).

TABLE 4 **Secondary principals' professional contact; 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2022**

Type of professional contact		2012 (*n* = 177) %	2015 (*n* = 182) %	2018 (*n* = 167) %	2022 (*n* = 50) %
Attend regular meetings		81	75	87	92
Discuss common issues and provide mutual support	Previously "Discuss common issues"	62	64	78	82
	Previously "Provide mutual support"	60	60	46	
Attend conference		73	68	82	74
Part of professional learning groups (PLG) we facilitate ourselves		*	*	22	30
Mentor another principal		13	13	17	22
Critical friendship based on structured visits to each other's schools		22	19	16	18
Part of PLG facilitated by external consultant		*	*	20	14
Mentored by another principal		13	11	17	14
Other		*	*	*	14
None		*	*	*	0

*Not asked

An "other" category was added to the question in 2022. Seven principals (14%) gave examples of other types of professional contacts. These included: serving on the executive of a named regional principals' group; joining the Wellington Loop (a trust that supports schools to work together on digital initiatives)[14]; and participating in informal networks and visits to other schools. Other types of support included in the "other" responses have already been addressed (e.g., Kāhui Ako).

3.6 Support for students' career pathways

Two new items added to the 2022 survey probed principals' views of their contacts with local community businesses and groups that might potentially provide career- and employment-related learning experiences for students while still at school, as well as the careers advice support the school provides (Figure 12). Most principals agreed or strongly agreed (90%) that their school has good community relationships, suggesting that there are strong partnerships between schools and external entities for the purpose of providing career experiences for students. Similarly, most principals (88%) agreed or strongly agreed that the school ensures all students have access to comprehensive career planning advice.

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14 https://www.wellingtonloop.net.nz/

FIGURE 12   **Principals' views of supporting students' future pathways in their schools (*n* = 51)**
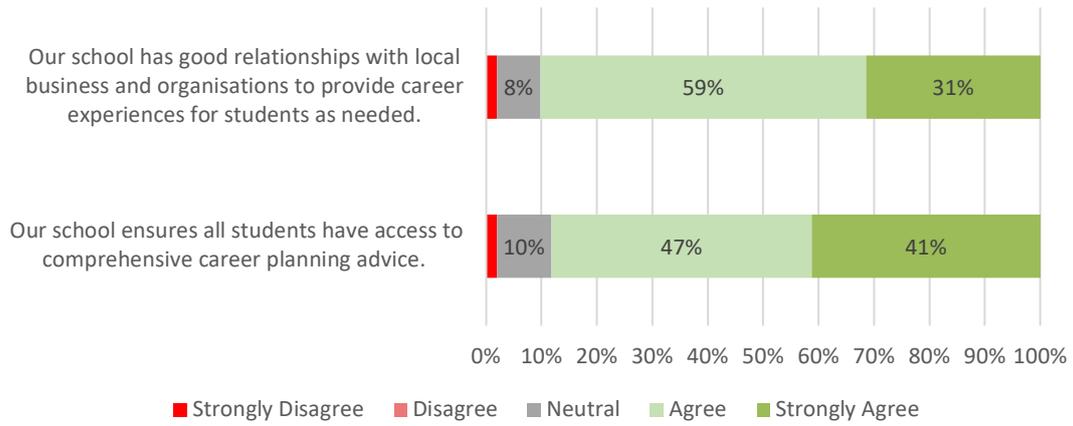
4. Teaching, learning, and wellbeing

Fifty principals completed Survey 2, and gave responses related to the following five areas:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Changes because of COVID-19
3. Student wellbeing and behaviour
4. Issues facing schools
5. Principals' work.

Completion rates varied, with 39–46 responses to most items.

4.1 Teaching and learning

This part of the survey addressed two topical aspects of teaching and learning in 2022: ending streaming, and how the learning programme is timetabled. The National Survey teachers' report noted that the growing emphasis in educational research and policy on moving away from ability grouping.[15] In 2022, CORE Education released their Kōkirihia report which describes plans and next steps for the removal of streaming by 2030.[16] Both de-streaming and making timetable changes[17] are complex areas where traditional practices can be entrenched. Leading change in these areas adds to the complexity of principals' work, as discussed in Section 3.

A snapshot of ability grouping

In 2022, a new set of tick-box items outlined various ways in which students might be grouped by ability. Principals indicated which descriptions applied to their school and could choose more than one (Figure 13). A majority of the sub-group of principals who answered this question (71%) said that all their classes were mixed ability. The second most common practice was to use ability grouping for "low-achieving" classes and mixed ability for all other classes (13%). Fewer reported that their school used other forms of streaming practices.

15 https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/Teacher%20perspectives%202021-national-survey-secondary-schools
16 https://core-ed.org/en_NZ/professional-learning/kokirihia-the-plan-for-removing-streaming-from-our-schools/
17 https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/its-time-transformational-timetabling-practices

FIGURE 13   **Ability grouping practices in secondary schools (*n* = 45)**

Which of the following best describes how classes are organised in your school?

Response	Percentage
All our classes are mixed ability.	71%
Other than a low achieving class our classes are mixed ability all the way through.	13%
Non-compulsory subject classes are mixed ability.	9%
We have high and low achieving classes, and then mixed ability all the way through.	7%
We have some ability grouping at years 12 and 13.	7%
Other than a high achieving class our classes are mixed ability all the way through.	4%
None of our classes are mixed ability.	0%

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

Timetabling and support for teaching and learning

Timetabling practices are an important part of the de-streaming puzzle because streaming has traditionally created barriers to some courses and pathways, particularly for students perceived to be of lower ability. How to best allocate existing resources in ways that give every student a fair chance to choose the courses they want is not a straightforward challenge. Figure 14 reports principals' perspectives on these matters.

Nearly all the principals (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that their timetable allows students to choose subjects that aligned with their future career goals and aspirations. Many (87%) agreed that students could take subjects they are interested in, and that the timetable was flexible enough for academic and vocational subjects to be taken at the same time (83%). Seventy-two percent indicated that they use Te Kura as a resource to augment what the school itself can offer.[18]

Sound information about students' progress and learning and career interests are an important support for both timetabling practices and guidance for students around subject choices. Many principals agreed or strongly agreed (83%) that they pay close attention to the academic progress students make in Years 9 and 10, while 77% indicated that they ask students about their career goals

18 Te Kura Pounamu is New Zealand's state-funded distance education provider: https://www.tekura.school.nz/

and aspirations so that they can be aligned with pathways in the senior secondary school. A similar proportion (75%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are working towards eliminating streaming from all subject areas. Somewhat less positively, only half the principals agreed that they get good information about students' academic strengths and needs when they enter their school (down from 78% in 2018).

FIGURE 14 **Teaching and learning practices (*n* = 46)**

Our school's timetable allows students to choose subjects that align with their future career goals or aspirations. — 2% / 48% / 46%

Our school's timetable allows most students to take subjects they are interested in. — 7% / 4% / 46% / 41%

We pay close attention to the academic progress of our Year 9-10 students. — 9% / 9% / 44% / 39%

Our school's timetable is flexible enough to allow taking academic and vocational courses at the same time. — 7% / 7% / 37% / 46%

We ask our Year 9-10 students about their aspirations and career goals so we can align those with their NCEA subjects and pathway. — 7% / 15% / 33% / 44%

We are working towards having no streaming/ability grouping in any learning area. — 5% / 16% / 27% / 48%

We use Te Kura to augment what we can provide to students. — 13% / 13% / 39% / 33%

We get good information about students' academic strengths and needs when they enter our school. — 26% / 20% / 35% / 15%

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

4.2 Changes because of COVID-19

We asked whether principals had sustained any changes they had made when the COVID-19 pandemic required staff and students to work off-site for extended periods of time. The majority (84%) said their school had completely changed the way they now work as a result of these experiences. A further 2% said they had taken some things that worked and integrated them into their work. Just 13% said they went back to how they used to work before COVID-19.

Principals were asked to select as many options as possible that best described the changes they had made because of COVID-19. Figure 15 below shows that the main changes principals had sustained were: offering opportunities to learn online (74%); communicating with parents and whānau (67%); replacing some assemblies or staff meetings with digital information (54%); enacting teacher planning and PLD online (39%); and providing student support (39%).

FIGURE 15 **Main changes principals have made because of COVID-19 (*n* = 39)**
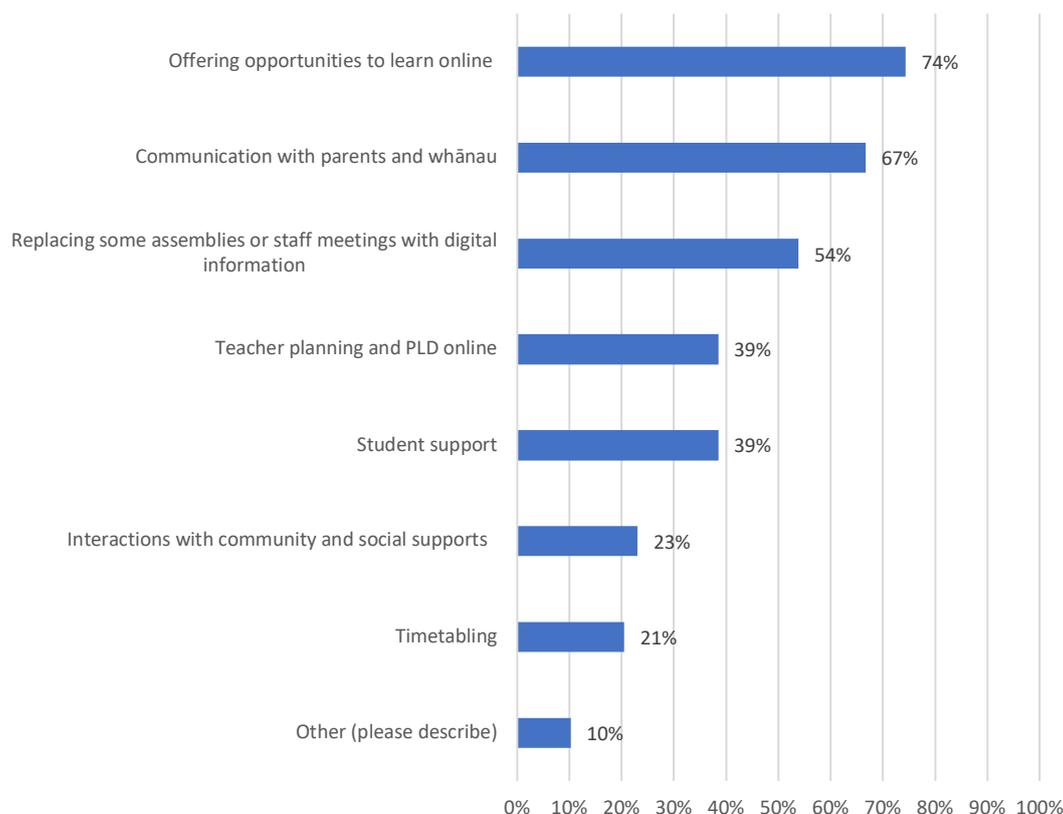
Principals were asked if they had "any comments on COVID-19 and its continuing effects for your school, staff, and students?". Sixteen principals responded to this open-ended question. Key themes in principal comments were:
- high exhaustion
- impact on staff and students' wellbeing
- lack of continuity in students' learning
- high level of absences and disengagement from school.

Comments included:

> 2022 has been the hardest year to date. Addressing gaps in students' learning, lack of continuity with COVID and previous isolation requirements. When students are present their teachers have often been absent.

> We are still experiencing staff and students getting Covid. Covid has had a significant impact on both staff and student wellbeing and workloads.

> There has definitely been a detrimental effect on students' literacy and numeracy levels (compared to the past) and older students' motivation.

> I think the biggest impact that has continued this year is attendance. I also think this will have impact in the years to come.

4.3 Student wellbeing and behaviour

Principals were asked about their school's plans and approaches to support student wellbeing.

Various school-wide plans and processes for supporting student wellbeing appear to be well embedded school-wide (Figure 16). Nearly all the principals (98%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school had well-embedded plans and processes for identifying and acting on students' social or mental health concerns, and for encouraging students to be inclusive and respectful of peers from other cultures. Many principals (80% or more) agreed that their school had well-embedded plans and processes for most of the other contexts we asked about.

Training teachers to recognise and act on mental health warning signs was one of three contexts where agreement did not exceed 80% (76% agreed or strongly agreed that their school had these plans and processes well embedded). The other two contexts that did not reach 80% agreement were: actively teaching wellbeing/emotional skills in everyday classes (64% agreed or strongly agreed); and exploring the healthy use of digital devices and impact of social media on wellbeing (62% agreed or strongly agreed).

FIGURE 16 **School-wide plans for supporting wellbeing (*n* = 45)**
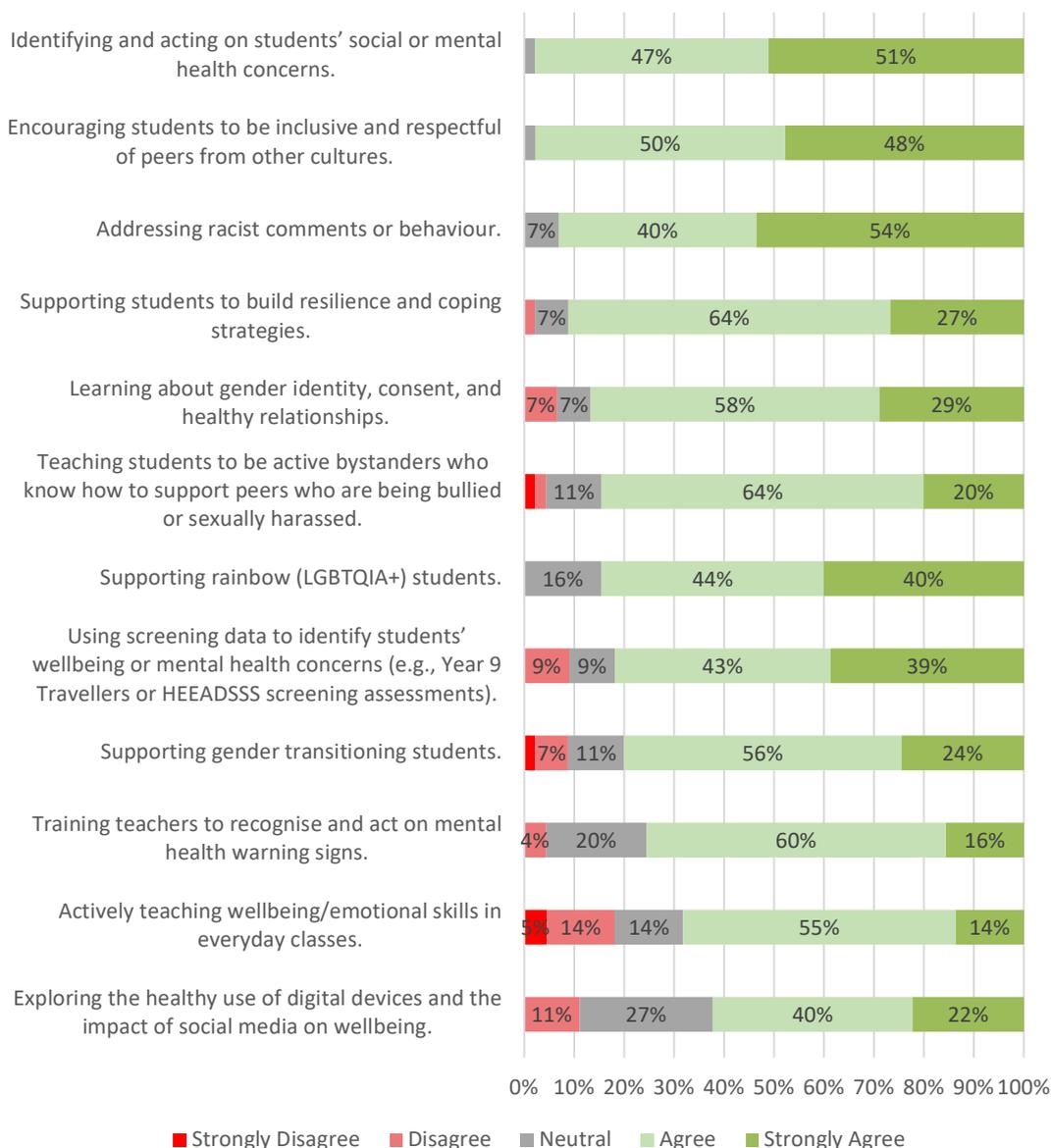
Note: The stem used in 2022 was "Our school has well embedded school-wide plans and processes related to ..."

Evidence of progress since 2018

Direct comparisons are not possible because the Likert scale options were changed for the 2022 survey, from an embedding scale (Well Embedded, Partially Embedded, Exploring, and Not Done), to an agreement scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). Therefore, positive ratings in 2018 denoted those where principals selected Well Embedded or Partially Embedded, whereas positive ratings in 2022 denoted those where principals selected Agree or Strongly Agree. Nevertheless, there are some indications that progress is being made on several aspects of caring for students' wellbeing.

- Having a plan or process for addressing students' racist comments or behaviour: 94% agreed in 2022, compared with 78% in 2018.
- Having a well-embedded school-wide process for supporting rainbow students: 84% agreed in 2022, compared with 58% in 2018.
- Training teachers to recognise and act on mental health warning signs: 76% agreement in 2022; up from 62% embedded in 2018.
- Actively teaching wellbeing/emotional skills in everyday classes: 64% agreement in 2022, up from the 49% who indicated in 2018 that they had embedded a school-wide plan for active classroom teaching of strategies for managing feelings and emotions.[19]

PB4L in secondary schools in 2022

The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) suite of initiatives has been the Government's main avenue of support for building learning environments that promote positive behaviours that foster students' wellbeing and achievement. Collectively, these initiatives are a long-term, systemic approach to address behaviour that can get in the way of learning. Half (51%) of the principals say their school is part of PB4L School-Wide, and a similar proportion (48%) say they are part of PB4L Restorative Practices (see Figure 17). This level of participation is similar to what principals reported in 2018.

Most schools have been involved in PB4L initiatives for 3 years or more. Many principals (72%) said their school is also part of other whole-school restorative practices. This has increased from 52% of principals who reported this in 2018. Eleven percent of the principals responded "not currently" to all three of the initiatives we asked about, similar to the 15% who responded "not currently" or "don't know" in 2018.

FIGURE 17 **PB4L schools (*n* = 45)**

4.4 Issues facing schools

We provided principals with a list of the top 10 issues principals said were facing their schools in 2018, as well as new ones we had heard about recently. Principals could select as many as currently applied to their school. Table 5 compares principals' responses in 2022 and 2018.

In 2022, providing support for vulnerable students was identified by a higher proportion of principals than it was in 2018 (80%, compared with 66%). It is now the top issue facing schools. Three-quarters of principals selected the second most identified issue—that too much is being asked of schools (up from 61% of principals in 2018). Likely related to this, 71% selected a new item, that it is hard to keep up with the pace of change in curriculum and NCEA.

Two items were selected by a lower proportion of principals in 2022, compared with in 2018. The cost of maintenance and replacement of digital technology was selected by 40% of principals, compared with 55% in 2018, and parent and whānau engagement was selected by 24% of principals, compared with 41% in 2018.[20]

TABLE 5   **Issues facing schools (*n* = 45)**

Issue	2018 (*n* = 167) %	2022 (*n* = 45) %
Providing support for vulnerable students (e.g., wellbeing or mental health needs)	66	80
Too much being asked of schools	61	76
Recruiting quality teachers	73	71
Hard to keep up with pace of change in curriculum and NCEA	*	71
Accessing specialist support for students with additional learning needs	*	64
Funding	64	56
Dealing with inappropriate use of technology	48	53
Re-engaging students who have not come back to school post-COVID lockdowns	*	49
Property maintenance or development	53	44
Timetabling to support a growing range of student learning opportunities	47	42
Cost of maintenance and replacement of digital technology	55	40
Staffing levels/class sizes	47	38
Low student attendance	*	38
Parent and whānau engagement (communicating with parents and whānau in 2018)	41	24
Managing the new equity index funding system	*	18

*Not asked

20 In 2018, this was worded "Communicating with parents and whānau".

Recruiting quality teachers

Table 5 above shows that 71% of principals identified recruiting quality teachers as an issue for their school. A set of tick-box questions asked in which specific learning areas it was proving difficult to find suitable teachers. Figure 18 shows their responses. Maths teachers appear to be the most difficult to recruit (72%), followed by teachers of te reo Māori (61%).

Sixty-two percent selected "Other", mentioning difficulties recruiting teachers into a variety of roles including guidance teachers, PE and health teachers, music teachers, and teachers of religious studies.

FIGURE 18   **Learning areas principals have difficulty recruiting teachers in (*n* = 45)**

In which areas do you have difficulty recruiting teachers?
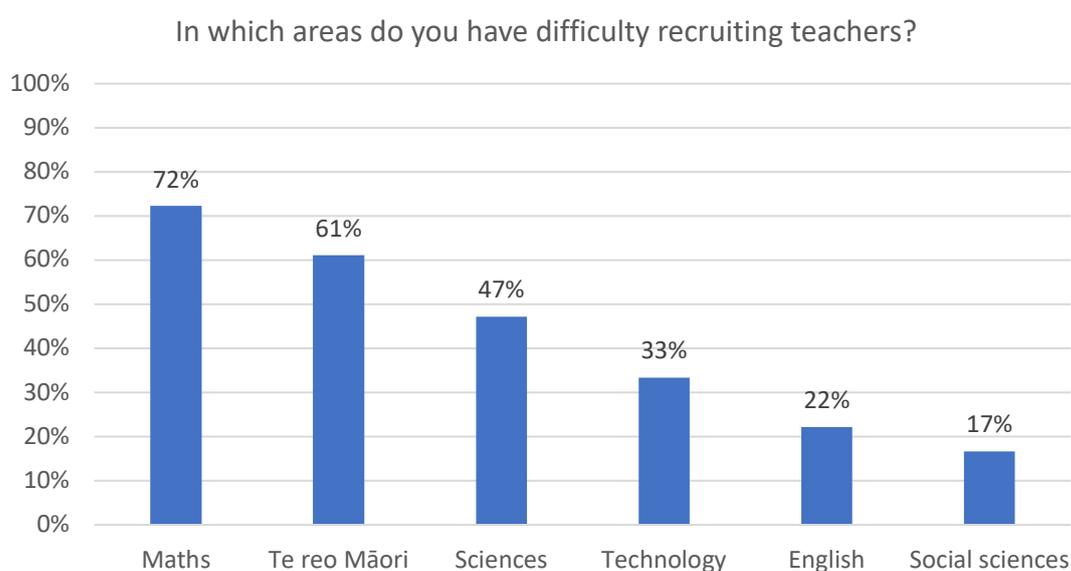
4.5 Principals' work

One question asked principals to estimate how many hours they work each week, including meetings, contact with trustees, and contact with parents and whānau, and to choose the nearest option (Figure 19). Only 2% reported working fewer than 50 hours a week. Nearly half (47%) work from 50–60 hours in an average week. One-fifth (20%) work from 61–65 hours, and another fifth (20%) from 65–70 hours a week. Eleven percent of principals reported that they work over 71 hours in an average week.

These data suggest that secondary principals routinely work long hours: almost all of them (98%) say they are working more than 50 hours a week. This is consistent with responses to the same question in 2018 and 2015. We noted a decrease in the proportion of principals working more than 60 hours a week (from two-thirds of principals in both 2018 and 2015 to 51% in 2022).

Additional insights on principal morale and workload are included later in the report (see Section 5.6).

FIGURE 19 **Principals' work hours per week (*n* = 45)**

In total, approximately how many hours a week do you work? (This includes meetings, contact with trustees, and contact with parents and whānau: all the work you do that is for the school.)

Hours	Percentage
≤40	0%
41–50	2%
51–55	9%
56–60	38%
61–65	20%
66–70	20%
71–80	9%
81+	2%
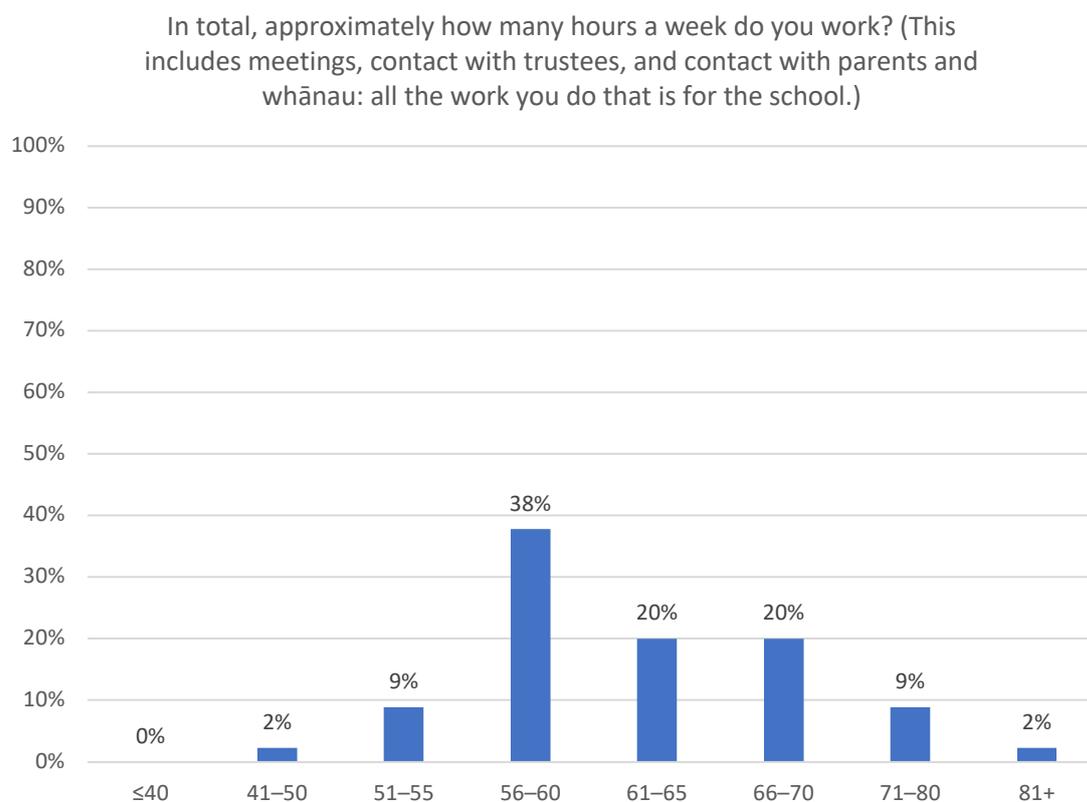
What would principals change about their work?

As in previous national surveys, principals were asked about the main things they would change about their work. They selected as many options as they wanted from a provided list. Table 6 compares responses across the four national surveys that have asked about this.

In 2022, as in previous surveys, the items selected by the highest proportion of principals are wanting more time to focus on educational leadership and more time to reflect/read/be innovative. These responses suggest that the *professional* aspects of their leadership continue to be crowded by the *administrative* aspects. There was a decrease in the proportion of principals who said that reducing administration and paperwork was a main thing they would change in their work, from 50% in 2018 to 30% in 2022. The proportion of principals selecting higher salary as a main thing they would change declined from 46% in 2018 to 36% in 2022, a return to the response levels in 2012 and 2015.

TABLE 6   **Changes secondary principals would like in their work; 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2022**

Change	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %	2018 (n = 167) %	2022 (n = 44) %
More time to focus on educational leadership	72	81	83	80
More time to reflect/read/be innovative	*	73	86	73
More balanced life	57	67	71	59
Reduce human resource management demands	35	30	47	48
Reduce external agencies' demands/expectations	41	30	44	48
Higher salary	38	34	46	36
Reduce administration/paperwork	61	54	50	30

Principals' career plans

Table 7 continues a long-established question that asks principals to select their future career plans for the next 5 years from a provided list of options. As in previous national surveys, more than half wish to continue as principal of their current school but note that the proportion has dropped in 2022. Overall, there is no change in the proportion who think they will change to a different role within education, lead another school, or retire. Of note in the 2022 data is a reduction in the proportion of principals who plan to apply for a study award/sabbatical/ fellowship (down from 40% in 2018 to 20% in 2022).

TABLE 7   **Likely career plan for secondary principals over next 5 years; 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2022**

Career plan	2009 (n = 187) %	2012 (n = 177) %	2015 (n = 182) %	2018 (n = 167) %	2022 (n = 45) %
Continue as principal of current school	65	65	62	62	53
Change to a different role within education	21	17	19	21	24
Apply for study award/sabbatical/ fellowship	34	36	32	40	20
Lead another school	22	14	23	20	20
Retire	19	20	19	22	18

5. Equity, curriculum, and working experiences

Forty-eight principals completed Survey 3, and gave responses related to the following seven areas:

1. Equity funding
2. Climate change and sustainability
3. NCEA changes
4. Aotearoa New Zealand Histories
5. Accessing Ministry-funded PLD
6. Morale and workload
7. Property.

Completion rates varied, with 41–43 response to most items.

5.1 Equity funding

From January 2023, the decile rating system was replaced by the Equity Index (EQI) system—a new model for determining the level of additional financial assistance that each school would be eligible for, in addition to their core operational funding. This will allow schools to make local decisions about how best to support students who face socioeconomic barriers to achievement.

Whereas the decile system was based on a broad estimate of the socioeconomic status of the community in which a school is located, the new EQI uses a finer-grained calculation to both identify need and to allocate funding.[21] The timing of the principals' survey provided a valuable opportunity to collect baseline data about principals' perceptions of this complex change and how well it is working.

Four Likert-scaled items probed principals' perspectives on the new equity system (Figure 20). Overall, there was little disagreement with the change. Nearly all (97%) of principals who responded to this question strongly agreed, agreed, or were neutral about the statement "I support the new Equity Index system" and the statement "Compared to the school decile system, I prefer the new Equity Index system" (95%). The comparatively high proportion of neutral responses no doubt reflects the newness of the model at the time the survey was undertaken.

Sixty percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the new EQI system will result in more accurate targeting of resources, but fewer (41%) thought it would reduce stigma associated with socioeconomic status.

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21 https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/changes-in-education/equity-index/

FIGURE 20 **Overall views of the EQI system (*n* = 42)**
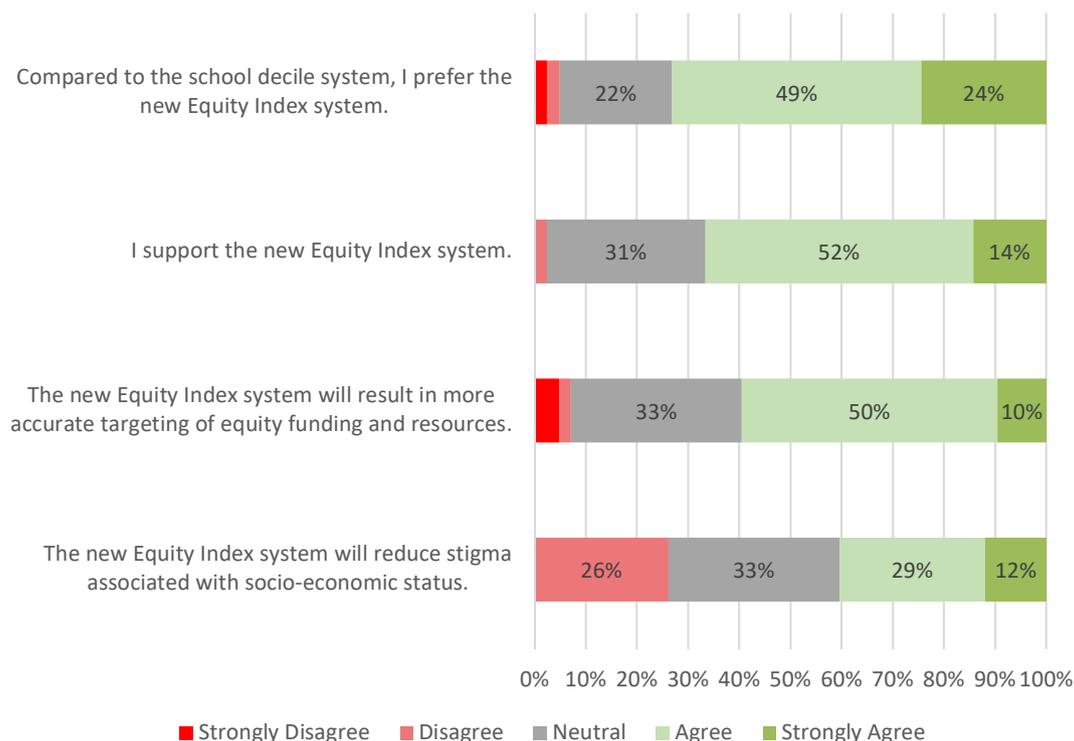
Four new items were introduced this year to gauge principals' initial thoughts on whether the EQI funding changes are likely to improve equitable outcomes.[22] Half of the principals (53%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would have more adequate operational funding consistent with the levels of socioeconomic barriers their students and families face, 29% of principals disagreed or strongly disagreed, and, again, a number were neutral (19%) which probably suggests uncertainty about how the new model would actually play out.

As with Figure 20 above, a high proportion of principals (33%–45%) selected the neutral response to the other three statements about the potential for the equity funding changes to: better support students; increase academic achievement; or increase engagement of students who face socioeconomic barriers. One-quarter of principals disagreed with all three of these statements.

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22 Early estimates suggested that some high decile schools would receive less equity funding under the new model, but the majority would receive more. See, for example, https://www.newsroom.co.nz/schools-receive-new-equity-funding-details

FIGURE 21 **Overall views of equity funding changes (*n* = 42)**

As a result of the equity funding changes, we [principals] will be able to...
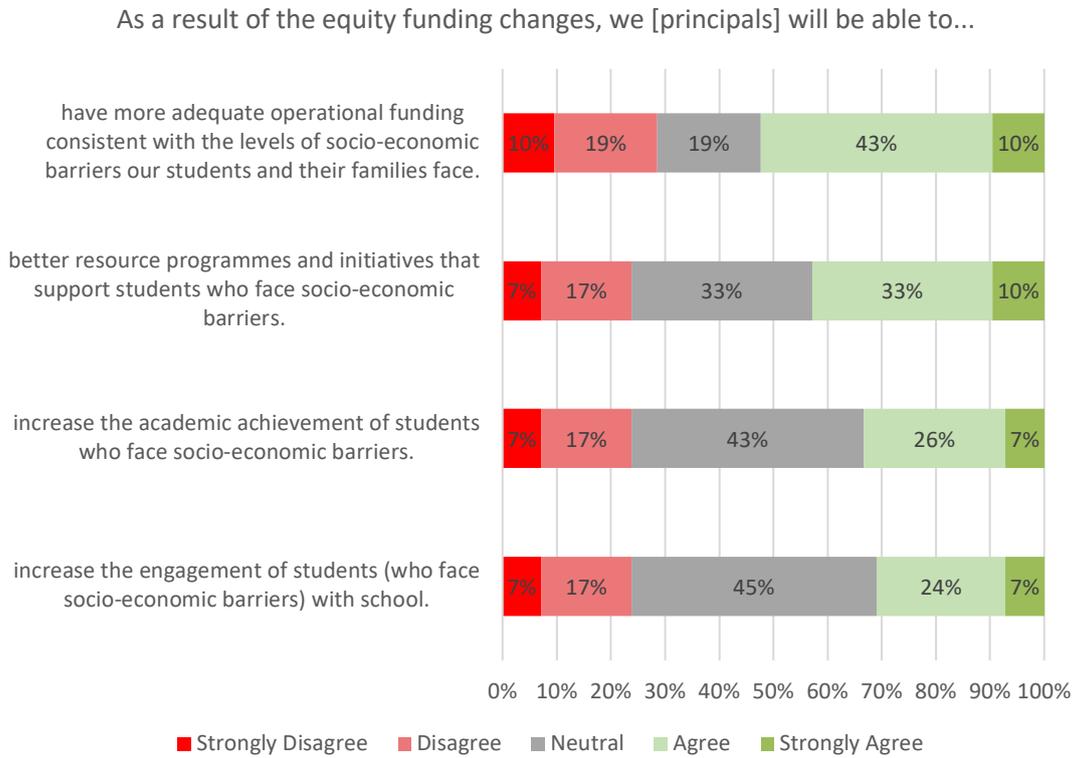
Principals had the opportunity to write an open comment about the new EQI system and associated funding changes, including their effects on student outcomes. Twenty-four principals made comments. These were mostly about their own school situation (receiving more or less funding), and wider comments about levels of operational funding.

> I think the theory of the Equity Index is sound. In reality in my school, there has been a change in demographic of students, with increasing social and emotional needs. There has been little change to the funding I receive, in fact less funding. Therefore I have answered disagree to all sections of question.

> We have gained a small increase in funding which is nowhere near the requirements to address complex social needs that contribute to student engagement and success issues for those students in need. It will make little to no difference because it will just keep pace with inflation for what we are doing already.

> This is a much more accurate representation of our community and it is positive to be funded as such.

> The index itself won't change educational outcomes, it is a funding mechanism. It is us that impact student outcomes.

> Yes it allocates funding in a more meaningful way but doesn't address general underfunding of schools.

5.2 Climate change and sustainability

This is the first time that the secondary principals' national survey has included questions about climate change and sustainability, although some questions in this area were also asked in the 2019 primary and intermediate school national survey, and a separate survey gathered more detailed climate and sustainability data from a national sample of secondary and area schools in 2020.[23,24] Principals responded to five Likert-scaled statements (Figure 22). We note that these survey data were gathered in late 2022, before the floods and cyclone that impacted many parts of the country between January–February 2023.

- Sixty percent of secondary principals said they were taking active steps to reduce their emissions.
- Just over half the secondary principals (56%) agreed or strongly agreed that there were ongoing climate action and/or sustainability projects within the school/school grounds.
- Forty-three percent of secondary principals agreed or strongly agreed that their students took part in such learning experiences.
- Forty percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the board of trustees actively supports a focus on sustainability and action on climate change.
- Less than a third of principals (29%) agreed or strongly agreed their school had been experiencing the impacts of climate change, and 37% were neutral. This is the lowest level of agreement in the set of statements.[25]

Principals were also asked if their school charter, strategic plan, or annual plan had goals, objectives, or actions related to sustainability or climate action: 20% of principals said yes; 76% said no; and 5% were not sure.

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23 https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/climate-change-and-sustainability-secondary-schools-report
24 https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/climate-change-and-sustainability-primary-and-intermediate-schools
25 The survey data were.

FIGURE 22   **A snapshot of climate change actions and impacts (*n* = 41)**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our school is taking active steps to reduce our emissions.	3%	13%	25%	50%	10%
Our school has ongoing climate action and/or sustainability projects within the school/school grounds.		18%	28%	48%	8%
Our school has ongoing involvement in local and/or regional climate action and sustainability projects beyond the school grounds.	5%	23%	30%	35%	8%
Our Board of Trustees actively supports a focus on sustainability and action on climate change.	3%	15%	43%	30%	10%
Our school community has been experiencing impacts of climate change.	2%	32%	37%	24%	5%

■ Strongly Disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ Neutral   ■ Agree   ■ Strongly Agree

5.3 NCEA changes

We undertook the 2018 National Survey at a key point for NCEA, when the significant review process was just beginning. At the time of the 2022 survey, piloting of the first tranche of NCEA changes was well underway and full Level 1 implementation was scheduled to begin in 2024. Implementation dates were pushed further out just after the survey closed. These shifting sands need to be kept in mind when interpreting responses to the survey.

Seven Likert-scaled items elicited principals' views of NCEA in general and what they thought the changes would mean for different groups of students in particular (Figure 23). It is notable that, for many items, there is a spread of responses across disagreement, neutral responses, and agreement, pointing to the range of views that principals have about the NCEA changes. As with the questions about the EQI, the high proportion of neutral responses could indicate that principals were taking a "wait and see" approach.

Across all items, the strongest reaction was not a positive one. Just over half the principals (57%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Level 1 achievement standards should only be used for students who might not continue to Level 2. Only 44% agreed or strongly agreed with the item "I support the new mandatory literacy and numeracy standards". A sizeable minority (44%) were concerned (i.e., agreed or strongly agreed) that having fewer achievement standards per subject increases the risk that some students will not get enough credits to gain an award.

Several items asked about impacts for specific groups of students. Fewer than half the principals agreed or strongly agreed that the changes should support increased achievement for: Māori students (42% agreement); Pacific students (35% agreement); and students with disabilities or who need learning support (30% agreement).

These lukewarm responses are congruent with principals' overall assessment of the changes. In 2022, and before the timeline was pushed out, a quarter (26%) of principals agreed or strongly agreed that they were positive about the NCEA changes, 35% were neutral, and 39% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

FIGURE 23 **Views of NCEA changes (*n* = 43)**
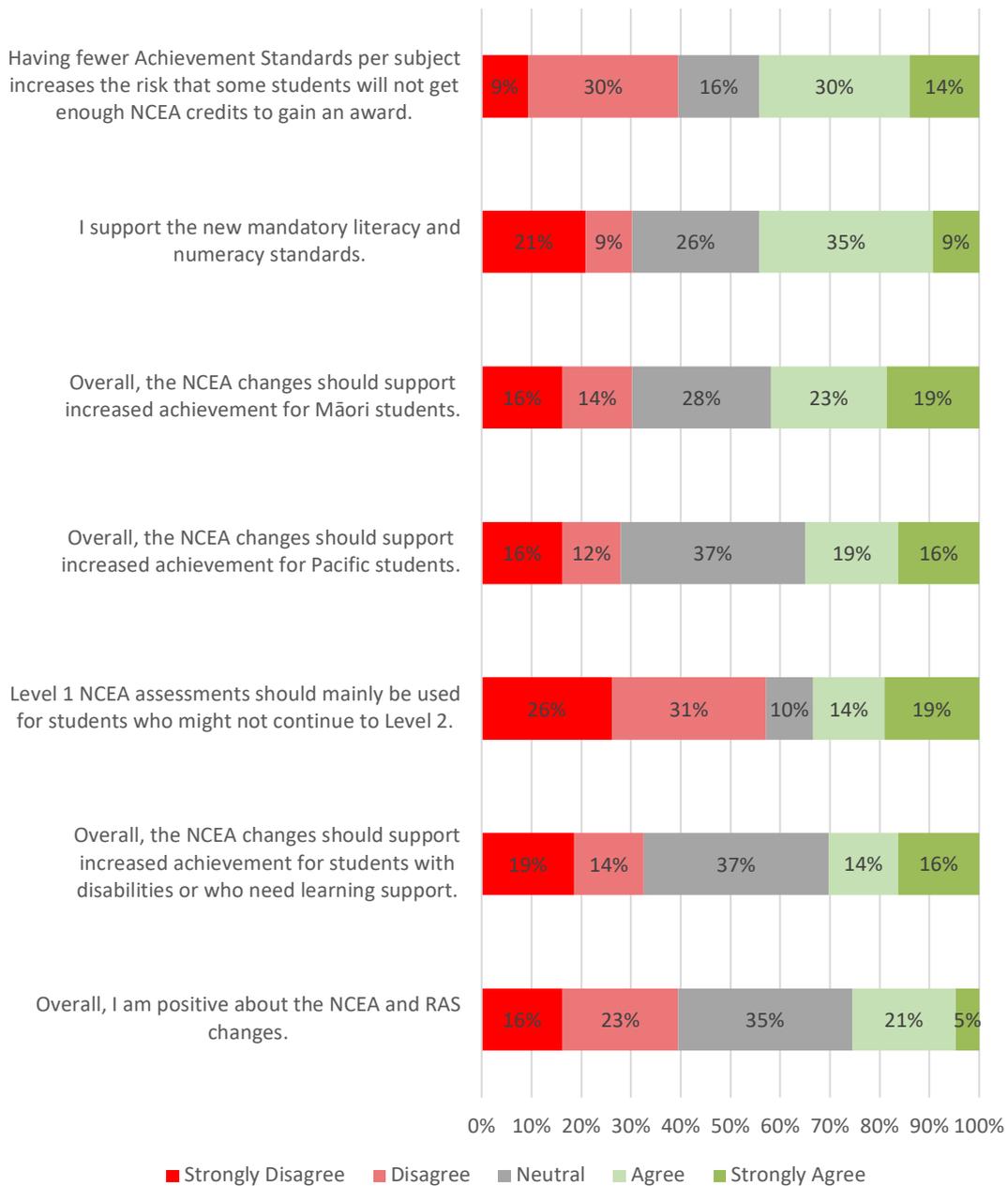
Twenty-three principals took the opportunity to make an open comment about the NCEA changes. All but two of these comments focused on concerns and barriers. Three themes became apparent: concerns about the new literacy and numeracy standards; management of the NCEA change process; and the relationship between the NCEA changes and the Curriculum Refresh, also underway at the time of the 2022 survey.

Concerns about the new literacy and numeracy standards

As part of the overall NCEA change package, new pass/fail standards have been developed for reading, writing, and numeracy. Students are assessed in an online Common Assessment Activity (CAA). The intention is that there will be two opportunities each year for students to sit the CAAs, and that they will become co-requisites for NCEA. That is, students will not be able to gain an NCEA award unless they pass all three. This change is a response to concerns about the need for more rigour in the assessment of these basic skills, but it is clearly in tension with another goal of the change package, which is to make NCEA more accessible and equitable for all students. The following comments indicated concern about the overall impact of these changes. Again, it is important to note that these comments were made in late 2022.

> The literacy barrier to students accessing the new numeracy assessments needs to be seriously addressed. NZQA do not seem capable of addressing this at the moment.

> Very unhappy about the proposed Literacy & Numeracy assessments. [It] very much feels like a backwards move even though I like the standards themselves. Student should have more opportunities to sit and not just through one-off exams.

> I am not convinced that the new lit/num standards will have a positive impact on Māori or Pasifika achievement. Standardised pass/fail testing doesn't come with a whakapapa of success for Māori and Pasifika.

Management of the NCEA change process

The following comments refer to the Ministry of Education's management of rolling out the changes into schools. Some principals were clearly not happy with how this had unfolded.

> Poor communication, terrible resources for TODs [Teacher Only Days]. No appreciation of impact on teachers and principals in an already stressful time due to COVID-19.

> There has been poor planning and roll out for staff and schools.

> We really just need the information in a timely manner so that we can prepare. We are talking major change and some areas don't have the information as to what subjects will look like after L1. We are fortunate that we have been involved in trial and pilots with great staff leading these, so we have an idea of what is coming.

> The change programme is putting a degree of pressure on the sector that I am not certain it can absorb. Workforce issues continue to create significant issues.

Relationship to the Curriculum Refresh

One of the areas of concern raised by principals is one of timelines and synchronisation. Secondary schools have long been urged to plan their senior courses around the national curriculum and not the achievement standards used to assess those courses. This advice is at odds with the timelines for the two areas of change, with the NCEA review and change process well underway before the refresh of the national curriculum began.

The Curriculum Refresh should have occurred before any NCEA and Achievement Standard changes.

I believe that we should have done the Curriculum Refresh first then had a look at NCEA. By changing NCEA first we are again doing assessment driven learning … I have supported the changes since the beginning but I am now having more doubts.

5.4 Aotearoa New Zealand Histories

The first area of the curriculum to be refreshed was the history component of the Social Sciences learning area. There was a deliberate move to ensure that all New Zealand's young people are taught about the history of our own nation, including the "difficult" bits where the interests of recent arrivals and those of the Indigenous population were at odds (i.e., colonisation and its impacts became a specific focus for learning to think critically about the past).[26] The final content for this part of the national curriculum was released in March 2022. From 2023, all schools must include Aotearoa New Zealand's (ANZ) Histories in local curriculum. For secondary schools, ANZ Histories must be taught up to Year 10.

The survey asked principals if they had started to engage with the Leading Local Curriculum Guides developed to support the new ANZ Histories curriculum: 71% said they had; 12% had not; and 17% were not sure. Two Likert-scaled items further probed their perspectives: 77% of principals said their staff had access to PLD to increase their knowledge of local and national histories; fewer (49%) said their planning had involved input from local hapū and/iwi; and one-third of principals gave a neutral response to this, suggesting they were unsure.

FIGURE 24   **Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories (*n* = 43)**
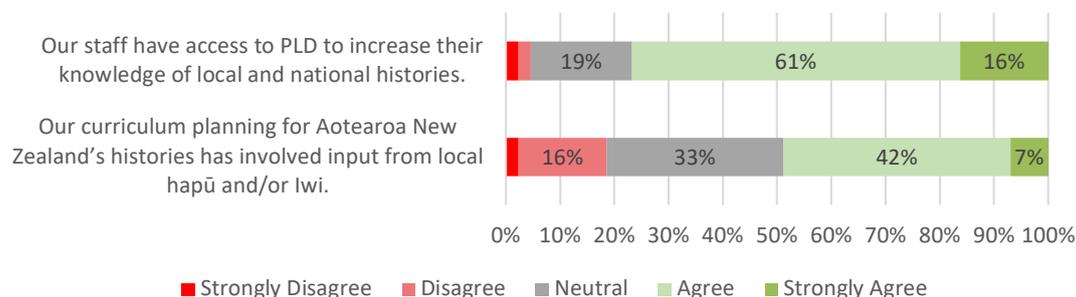
One additional question asked principals what stage best described their school in relation to the Ministry's self-review tool for implementing ANZ Histories in their local curriculum. At the time of the survey in 2022, the largest proportion of schools were at Stage 2: developing understanding and relationships.

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26 This change is discussed here by two of the academics involved: https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/news/2022/12/how-to-teach-history

FIGURE 25 **Stage of engagement with ANZ Histories (*n* = 43)**

Which stage would you say best describes your school in relation to the Ministry's self-review tool/Poutama for implementing Aotearoa New Zealand (ANZ) Histories in your local curriculum?
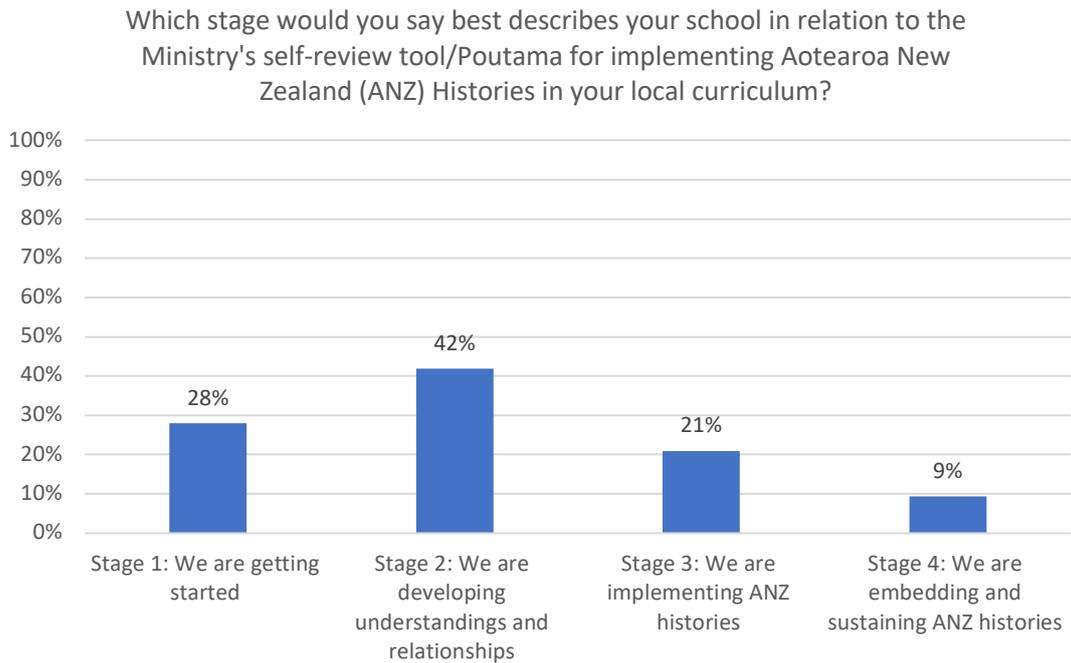
5.5 Accessing Ministry-funded PLD

Five Likert-scaled items probed principals' perceptions of Ministry of Education-funded professional learning in general. Nearly three-quarters (73%) were positive that Ministry-funded PLD allowed them to access professional learning that supported their priorities. Levels of agreement were lower (49%–58%) for whether Ministry-funded PLD required an unreasonable amount of reporting, was worth the time investment to secure it, and allowed schools to select good providers.

FIGURE 26 **Views of Ministry-funded PLD (*n* = 41)**

Ministry-funded PLD...

Allows us to have PLD that supports our priorities. — 7% | 15% | 63% | 10%

Allows us to select good providers. — 17% | 22% | 51% | 7%

Is worth the time investment to secure it. — 17% | 22% | 46% | 7%

Requires an unreasonable amount of reporting (planning and milestone reports). — 22% | 29% | 37% | 12%

Is easy to organise at the time that suits us. — 24% | 24% | 42% | 2%

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

5.6 Morale and workload

Principals were asked to respond to four Likert-scaled items related to their morale and a further set of four items that probed perceptions of their workload (Figures 27 and 28).

Most (80%) principals agreed or strongly agreed that that they enjoy their job, but this compares with 93% who said this in 2018. Two-thirds (66%) agreed or strongly agreed that their overall morale was good. In 2018, a different scale was used, and a similar proportion of principals rated their overall morale as "very good" or "good".

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of principals agreed or strongly agreed that they have the internal support they need to do their job effectively, but fewer (49%) got the external support they needed. These responses are unchanged from 2018.

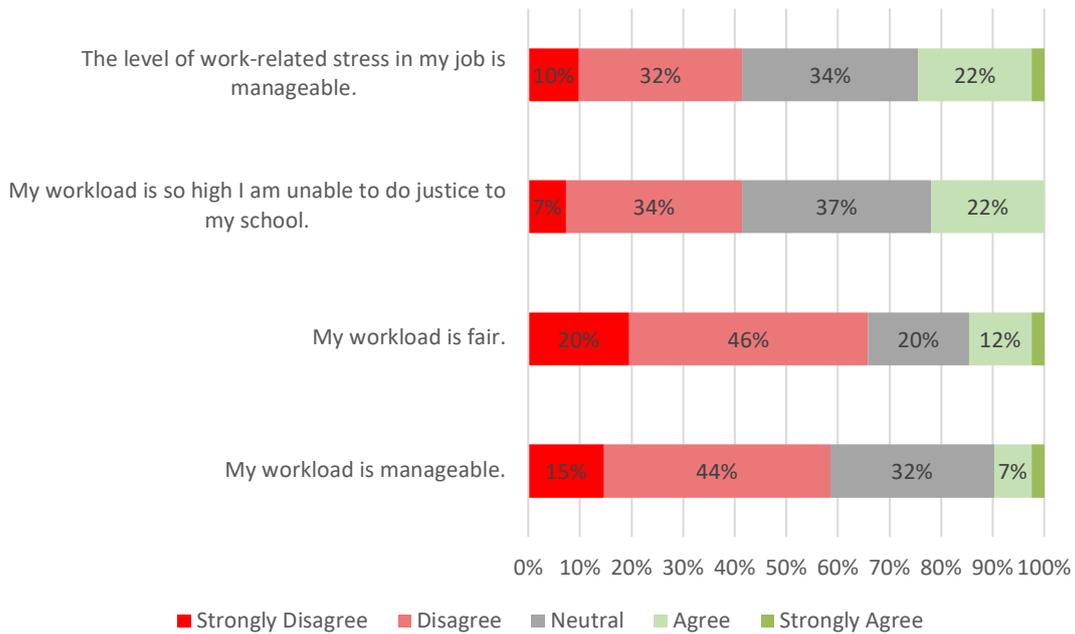FIGURE 27 **Principals' perceptions of enjoyment, morale, and support for their work (*n* = 41)**
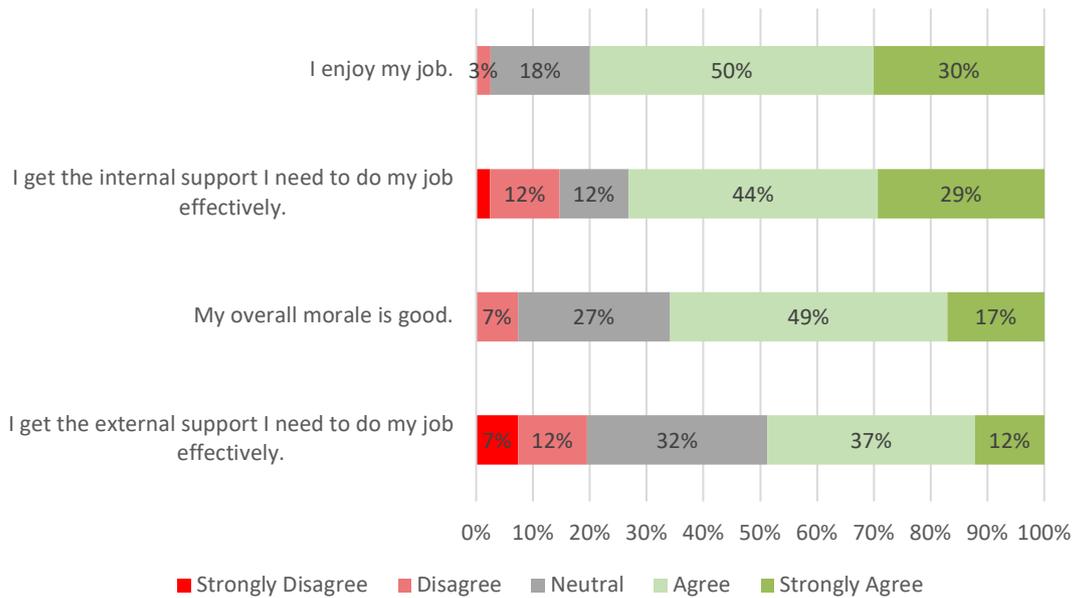
The proportion of principals who agreed or strongly agreed that their workload is manageable has continued to decline. In 2015, 36% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that their workload was manageable. In 2018, this dropped to 22% and, in 2022, just 9% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that their workload was manageable. The same proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed in both 2018 and 2022 (just under 60%): the change in this 2022 survey was that a higher proportion of principals selected the neutral response.

In 2022, 14% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that their workload was fair (a further 20% were neutral). Twenty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed that the level of work-related stress was manageable (a further 34% were neutral). Twenty-two percent agreed that their high workload prevented them from doing justice to their school, and a further 37% were neutral.

FIGURE 28 **Workload views (*n* = 41)**

The level of work-related stress in my job is manageable.	10%	32%	34%	22%
My workload is so high I am unable to do justice to my school.	7%	34%	37%	22%
My workload is fair.	20%	46%	20%	12%
My workload is manageable.	15%	44%	32%	7%

■ Strongly Disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ Neutral   ■ Agree   ■ Strongly Agree

5.7 Property

The survey concluded with three Likert-scaled items that asked about school property (Figure 29). Just over half of principals (56%) agreed or strongly agreed that their buildings are in good condition and that they are flexible enough for teaching and learning needs (53%). Slightly more (60%) agreed their school had sufficient space for all their classes. Around one-third disagreed with each of these statements. This is consistent with the 44% of principals who selected property maintenance or development as a major issue for their school (Table 5 in Section 4.4 with data from Survey 2).

The only change from 2018 is a notable increase in the proportion of principals who agreed that their buildings are flexible enough for teaching and learning needs (53% agreed or strongly agreed with this item in 2022, up from 28% in 2018).

FIGURE 29 **Property (*n* = 40)**
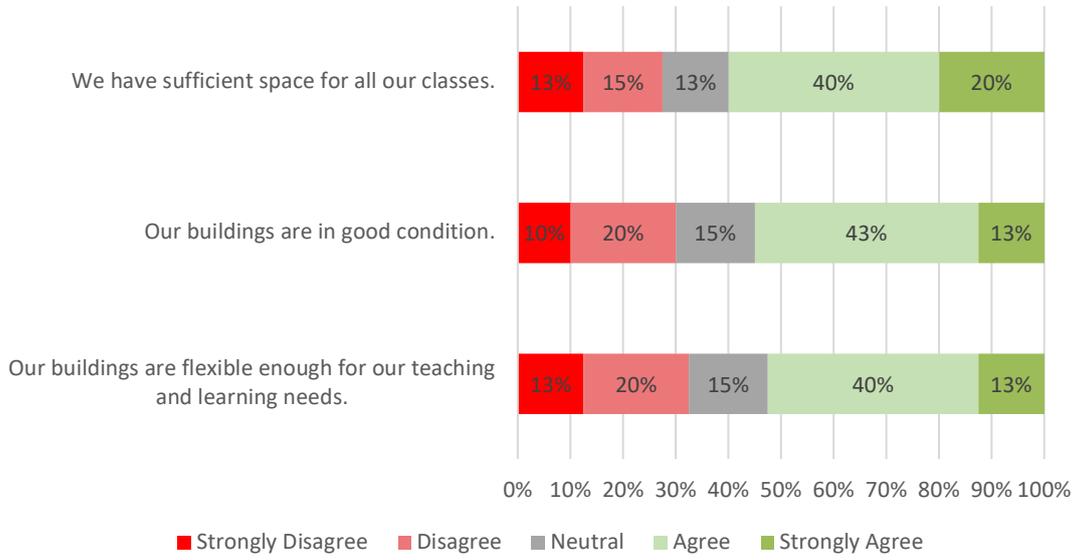
Appendix

Principal demographics and school characteristics

TABLE A1 **Principals' gender (*n* = 137)**

Gender	*n*	%
Female	54	39
Male	83	61

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

TABLE A2 **Principals' ethnicity (*n* = 136)**

Ethnicity	*n*	%
NZ European/Pākehā	123	90
Māori	15	11
Pacific (3 Samoan, 1 Fijian)	4	3
Asian (1 Indian, 1 Chinese)	2	1
Other	2	1

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

TABLE A3 **Speaking Māori in daily conversation (*n* = 136)**

Speaking Māori in daily conversation	n	%
Very well (I can talk about almost anything in Māori)	5	4
Well (I can talk about many things in Māori)	6	4
Fairly well (I can talk about some things in Māori)	29	21
Not very well (I can talk about simple/basic things in Māori)	68	50
No more than a few words or phrases	28	21

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

TABLE A4 **Profile of principal respondents by school decile bands; 2018 and 2022**

Decile	Principals 2018 (*n* = 167) %	Principals 2022 (*n* = 154) %
1–2	11	16
3–4	22	25
5–6	24	18
7–8	24	23
9–10	18	19

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

TABLE A5 **Breakdown of principal respondents by area (urban/rural) (*n* = 154)**

Area (urban/rural)	*n*	%
Main urban area	90	58
Minor urban area	36	23
Rural area	16	10
Secondary urban area	12	8

Note 1: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Note 2: Our sample is representative of all secondary principals by area.

TABLE A6 **Breakdown of principal respondents by region (*n* = 154)**

Regional council	n	%
Auckland region	25	16
Wellington region	23	15
Canterbury region	23	15
Waikato region	14	9
Bay of Plenty region	6	4
Manawatu-Wanganui region	12	8
Northland region	9	6
Otago region	13	8
Hawke's Bay region	6	4
Taranaki region	2	1
Southland region	7	5
Nelson region	1	1
Gisborne region	5	3
Marlborough region	2	1
Tasman region	3	2
West Coast region	3	2

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

TABLE A7 **Breakdown of principal respondents by school's co-ed status (*n* = 154)**

Co-ed status	*n*	%
Co-educational	117	76
Single sex (girls' school)	23	15
Single sex (boys' school)	14	9

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

TABLE A8 **Breakdown of principal respondents by school type (*n* = 154)**

School type	*n*	%
Secondary (Years 9–15)	90	58
Secondary (Years 7–15)	42	27
Composite	21	14
Secondary (Years 11–15)	1	1

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

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