

Teaching, School, and Principal Leadership Practices Survey

2018

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The Teaching, School, and Principal Leadership Practices Survey tool (TSP) was available for free school use for the second consecutive year in 2018. It was used by 265 schools that wanted an evidence base for understanding and developing their practices for the benefit of students.

This report gives the aggregate picture for those schools. Compared with the national school picture, schools using the TSP included fewer small, rural, decile 1–2 schools, and schools with high Māori enrolment.

In 2018, many teachers whose schools used the TSP report that the teaching practices included in the TSP occur well or very well. Many of these teachers and principals also report that school practices that are known to be positively linked with student outcomes are happening in their schools. Principal leadership is generally well regarded. The aggregated data also show the aspects that are challenging for teachers, schools, and principals, and the need to allocate sufficient time to work together, reflect, and inquire to keep improving student learning.

There is considerable variability between schools. We found some relationship between practices and school type and school decile. But, overall, school characteristics did not seem to be playing a strong role. This suggests that aspects that are challenging require system-wide support.

Teaching practices

Most teachers report that they can improve the learning outcomes of all the students they teach and feel responsible for their students' wellbeing—findings that signal the self-efficacy needed for continual improvement of teaching. Other teaching practices that many teachers see themselves doing well or very well include promoting understanding of others' perspectives and points of view and making appropriate changes in response to challenge and feedback from colleagues.

Not surprisingly, it is practices related to the new or less familiar aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* that have not been systematically supported that fewer teachers saw themselves carrying out well or very well.

These aspects include:

- ensuring students direct their own learning pace, content, and goals
- ensuring that students interact with information to critique and create knowledge
- drawing on students' different languages, cultures, and identities as resources for the learning of all
- ensuring that expertise held by whānau and members of the local community is used to support collective learning in class or other school activities; and
- that students contribute to the local community in ways valued by the community.

More experienced teachers reported higher levels of teaching practice for many of the Teaching Practices items.

Those who team-taught all the time (14% of teachers) gave higher ratings on the items relating to supporting student capabilities and agency in their learning, flexible groupings, work with parents and whānau and the local community

around learning, and use of research and curriculum support documents.

We found a few differences related to school socioeconomic decile. The main exceptions were that the higher the decile, the higher teachers rated their work in relation to supporting student capabilities and agency in their learning, and partnerships with parents and whānau.

Only a few differences in teaching practices were evident between teachers in primary and secondary schools. They were mainly around partnerships with parents and whānau, use of flexible grouping (more primary teachers reported doing these well or very well), and students interacting with information to critique and create knowledge, and transform it (more secondary teachers reported doing this well or very well).

School practices

The school practices rated highest by teachers at a national level appear to be those associated with providing a supportive and caring environment, and information sharing related to student learning between teachers, and between teachers and parents and whānau.

There are some useful pointers to the kind of practices that many schools may be finding particularly challenging to embed. The practices, which fewer than 25% identify as “very like our school”, suggest the need to rethink how schools organise time, particularly to ensure time for teachers working together to benefit student learning, how they can better weave local curriculum with their community, local Māori, and access or co-create effective and relevant teaching resources.

Primary teachers reported more of the School Practices items as being very much like their school compared with secondary teachers. However, there is also considerable similarity across school types.

There is considerable similarity across school socioeconomic decile, with some exceptions. More decile 1–2 teachers report that practices supporting Māori student learning and belonging are “very like our school”. The higher the school decile, the more that teachers report expertise and resources for all NZC learning areas, and coherent curriculum across year levels.

School practices for Māori learners

Māori are 24% of our students in schools. It is crucial that they experience high levels of belonging and success. We brought together five items from across the school practices domains that together give an indication of how embedded practices that are known to support Māori student success are. Just under a third of the teachers thought it was very like their school that teachers taught in ways that promote Māori students’ belonging in the school, or that Māori students experienced culturally responsive pedagogy. There is considerable variability between schools on this scale, not all related to differences in the proportion of Māori students in the school.

Collaborative practices

A set of seven items in the School Practices section gives us insight into how common it is for teachers to be in schools where teachers work together to enable student progress, and to mutually strengthen practice. While these practices are common, they are more likely to be reported as “moderately like my school”, rather than “very like my school”.

Most of the schools taking part in TSP in 2018 were part of a Kāhui Ako. Many principals reported benefits as a result, primarily in relation to their own professional support. Between 35% and 39% of teachers reported benefits from their Kāhui Ako involvement. Gains were highest for the Kāhui Ako across-school roles, followed by the within-school roles, then other teachers.

The level of working collaboratively *within* a school was related to the gains that teachers were reporting from their collaboration across schools through Kāhui Ako, suggesting a positive relationship.

Principal leadership practices

Principals’ caring for students and staff, modelling school values, and showing integrity and commitment to continual improvement are highly rated by teachers and principals alike. Principals were more self-critical about how well they provided a fresh perspective, asking staff questions that got them thinking, led and supported cultural engagement, kept staff up to date with education initiatives that have an impact on teaching, or promoted the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Principals who strongly agreed that they could schedule enough time for the educational leadership part of their job gave higher ratings to their practices than other principals. But only 29% of principals thought they could schedule enough time for the educational leadership part of their role. Being able to schedule enough time for the educational leadership component of their job is not related to principal experience, or school decile, though it is related to whether the principal also teaches.

Only 28% of principals thought their role was sustainable. Most also faced difficulty recruiting effective teachers for their school—an added concern.

Differences between schools

There were some differences between schools related to their school characteristics, particularly school type and socioeconomic decile, and, to a lesser extent, school size and location. But, overall, school characteristics did not seem to be playing a strong role. We found much the same thing in analysing the patterns for those who took part in the TSP in 2017.

This gives us some confidence that, while participation in the TSP in 2018 did not provide a totally representative response in terms of the national distribution of school characteristics, it has provided a reasonable national picture of what teachers and principals perceive their and their schools’ practices to be.

Individual schools differ substantially on the extent to which teachers give high ratings to their own practice, school practices, and principal leadership. This suggests that there is scope to learn from the schools with high teacher scores on the scales; those that have embedded consistently strong teaching, school, and principal leadership practices.

The practices that differ least among schools and which also have low median proportions of teachers saying that

they do something very well, or that a school practice is “very like our school”, or that the principal does something very well, signal some common challenges for New Zealand schools, and that attention is needed to a more strategic approach to supporting schools. They include:

- the newer aspects of NZC: developing student capabilities of agency, critical thinking, capacity to work with knowledge in new ways
- realising the potential of teaching as inquiry, including protecting the time for teacher inquiry and evaluation, teachers having a shared understanding of inquiry, and using inquiry to make worthwhile changes in teaching and learning
- working collaboratively
- keeping up to date with new knowledge
- drawing on students’ different languages, cultures, values, and knowledges as resources for the learning of all
- collaborating with the local community, hapū, and iwi and using their expertise to support learning, and contributing to the local community in ways that it values
- having challenging goals for every student
- curriculum in every learning area that draws on and adds to content relevant to the identities of Māori students.

Patterns for schools that used the TSP in both 2017 and 2018

Teachers from 109 schools and principals from 97 schools used the TSP in both 2017 and 2018. These are likely to be schools whose leaders are interested in using data such as this to see how the school is going. Comparing their aggregate responses for 2018 and 2017 indicates a greater focus on inquiry. More teachers reported their principal promoting the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, leading and supporting appropriate cultural engagement, and caring for staff. Principals were more self-critical in 2018 than in 2017.

Our analysis raised questions that we hope to answer by following up on individual school patterns—perhaps these patterns are due to changes within a limited number of the schools rather than occurring across all or most schools—and to find out more about what was happening in schools where there was change in the TSP ratings, and where there was not; and the uses made of TSP.

Using the 2018 TSP aggregate picture to support ongoing improvement

The TSP findings provide a common language for teachers, school leaders, those they work with to develop their capabilities, and the government education agencies. This common language supports the collective work that is needed to identify where expertise and focus could be best placed to improve teaching and learning, and school leadership. There are some key areas of practice that we would identify as fruitful to focus on in a coherent way across the school system. Most are present in the Teaching Standards, the Education Review Office’s evaluation indicators, the new Educational Leadership Capability Framework, guidance for Kāhui Ako, and NZC. The 2018 TSP aggregate picture shows that schools need to be better supported to use these frameworks positively to strengthen teaching, school, and leadership practices, and, in turn, student belonging, wellbeing, and success.

These key practice areas are:

- developing student agency in their learning, including their understanding of how to participate in and contribute to community
- developing capabilities such as critical thinking
- drawing on students’ differences as resources for all
- strengthening Māori student identities
- using parent and whānau and community expertise
- teaching as inquiry
- ensuring that teachers get the time they need to undertake inquiry and collaborative work (e.g., by reworking school days and allocations).

The TSP shows that there are schools and teachers we can learn from, but that we have to think *how* schools and teachers can best learn from each other, and how that fits with what is being asked of them by government agencies, and the support they can call on to develop and use new understandings.

The full report is available at www.tsp surveys.org.nz and www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/tsp2018