



Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa

# Primary and intermediate schools in 2013

Main findings from the NZCER  
national survey

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Cathy Wylie and Linda Bonne  
New Zealand Council for Educational Research



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2014

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# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Some key findings.....	2
<b>2. School resources and relations with other educational services.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Funding and staffing .....	5
School roll and relations with other schools and ECE services .....	6
<i>Roll numbers and competition</i> .....	6
<i>Student mobility</i> .....	8
Schools working together.....	10
Transitions into and from primary and intermediate schools.....	12
Summary.....	12
<b>3. Support and challenge for schools .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Interaction with education agencies and sector organisations .....	15
Experiences with ERO reviews.....	17
Interaction with the local Ministry of Education.....	20
Schools' access to external expertise and knowledge .....	23
Summary.....	26
<b>4. Working with the New Zealand Curriculum.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Schools' ongoing work with <i>NZC</i> .....	30
Professional learning related to <i>NZC</i> .....	31
Learning experiences for students.....	34
Students taking responsibility for their learning .....	37
Parents' perspectives on their child's development of key competencies.....	39
Summary.....	40
<b>5. National Standards .....</b>	<b>43</b>
Views of the National Standards themselves .....	43
Trustee and parent perspectives .....	44
Teachers' perspectives on the National Standards .....	46

Principal perspectives .....	.49
Summary.....	52
<b>6. Student wellbeing and behaviour .....</b>	<b>.55</b>
Schools' approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour .....	.55
External support for student wellbeing and behaviour.....	.60
Teachers' experience of support for behaviour.....	.62
Summary.....	.63
<b>7. ICT use.....</b>	<b>.65</b>
Current policy .....	.65
E-learning.....	.66
Use of ICT in classes .....	.67
Teachers' views of the value of e-learning .....	.68
Student management systems .....	.69
Internet use for professional and governance use .....	.72
Communication with parents .....	.73
Looking to the future .....	.74
Summary.....	.74
<b>8. Challenges facing schools .....</b>	<b>.77</b>
Principals' views.....	.78
Teachers' views .....	.79
Trustees' views .....	.80
Parents' views.....	.80
Summary.....	.81
<b>9. The principal role and workload .....</b>	<b>.83</b>
Principals' achievements.....	.83
Workload and morale.....	.85
Support for the principal's role .....	.86
Changes principals would like in their work.....	.89
Pathways to the principalship .....	.89
Plans for the future.....	.90
Summary.....	.90
<b>10. Teachers' perspectives on their work.....</b>	<b>.93</b>
Teachers' achievements .....	.93
Morale and workload .....	.94
Schools as professional learning cultures.....	.95

Teachers' experiences of professional learning .....	100
Changes teachers would make in their work.....	104
Career plans .....	105
Summary.....	107
<b>11. Trustees' perspectives and the work of school boards.....</b>	<b>109</b>
Trustee experience and paths to the trustee role.....	109
The role of boards .....	111
Support for the trustee role.....	114
The work of boards .....	120
Parents and community input into board work .....	123
Board achievements .....	126
Summary.....	127
<b>12. Parent perspectives .....</b>	<b>129</b>
School choice.....	129
Parents' views of their child's school experiences.....	131
Parents' views of school support for their child's development .....	136
Changes parents would like .....	137
Information about children's progress .....	139
Reporting to parents on their child's mid-year progress .....	141
Information about the school .....	142
Information about education .....	143
Parents' consultation and contact with their school's board of trustees .....	144
Parents' involvement in their child's school .....	146
Summary.....	146

## Tables

Table 1	School actions to encourage enrolments, reported by principals (n = 180) .....	8
Table 2	Principals' views on the outcomes of their school's last ERO review .....	18
Table 3	Principals' views on roles for their local/regional Ministry of Education office .....	22
Table 4	Principals' views about possible roles of their local/regional Ministry of Education office (n = 180) .....	23
Table 5	Principals' views on the accessibility of external expertise or knowledge: learning areas (n = 180) .....	24

Table 6	Principals' views of the accessibility of external expertise and knowledge: pedagogy ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	24
Table 7	Principals' views of the accessibility of external expertise or knowledge: supporting priority learners ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	25
Table 8	Principals' views of the accessibility of external expertise and knowledge: other areas of learning and school organisation ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	25
Table 9	Teachers' and principals' views of their school's current work with The New Zealand Curriculum.....	30
Table 10	Teachers' and principals' reports of school professional learning related to <i>NZC</i> over the last 2 years.....	32
Table 11	School views of the National Standards .....	44
Table 12	Teachers' reports of changes to their school's assessment practices because of National Standards ( <i>n</i> = 713).....	47
Table 13	Teachers' views of the difference made by National Standards to their teaching: data-related ( <i>n</i> = 713) .....	48
Table 14	Teachers' views of the difference made by National Standards to their teaching: work with students ( <i>n</i> = 713) .....	48
Table 15	Teachers' views of the difference made by National Standards to their teaching: curriculum ( <i>n</i> = 713) .....	49
Table 16	Principals' views of the difference made by National Standards use at their school: data use ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	49
Table 17	Principals' views of the difference made by National Standards to work with students & teachers' work ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	50
Table 18	Principals' views of Ministry of Education support and development for student wellbeing and behaviour ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	60
Table 19	Principals' views of CYF and other support for student wellbeing and behaviour ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	61
Table 20	Principals' views of health and community agencies' support for student wellbeing and behaviour ( <i>n</i> = 180) .....	62
Table 21	ICT for learning that teachers reported their students using often: 2007, 2010, and 2013.....	67
Table 22	Teachers' use of ICT and the Internet to get feedback and ideas for teaching ( <i>n</i> = 713).....	73
Table 23	Challenges facing the school .....	78
Table 24	Principals' main achievements in the last 3 years.....	84
Table 25	Ministry of Education-funded support for the principal's role, used by principals over the last 2 years.....	88
Table 26	Principals' desired changes to their work ( <i>n</i> = 180) .....	89
Table 27	Teachers' main achievements over the last 3 years ( <i>n</i> = 713).....	94
Table 28	Teachers' views of the impact of Ministry-funded professional learning in the last 2 years ( <i>n</i> = 713) .....	104
Table 29	What primary teachers would change about their work.....	105
Table 30	Trustees' reasons for joining their school board .....	110
Table 31	Views on the key elements of the board of trustees' role .....	112

Table 32	Principal and Trustee views that the amount of responsibility asked of boards is about right ....	112
Table 33	Changes trustees would make to their role ( $n = 277$ ).....	113
Table 34	Formal training or support for trustee work over previous 12 months (n = 277).....	114
Table 35	Impact of formal training or support for trustee work in past 12 months ( $n = 277$ ).....	115
Table 36	Other sources of advice or support over previous 12 months ( $n = 277$ ) .....	116
Table 37	Board capacity and need for external advice and support ( $n = 277$ ) .....	118
Table 38	Trustees' views on roles of their local/regional Ministry of Education office ( $n = 277$ ) .....	119
Table 39	Main issues raised by parents with their school board.....	124
Table 40	Main achievements of trustees' boards over past year ( $n = 277$ ).....	126
Table 41	Parents' views about the information they receive, 2007–2013 .....	139
Table 42	Parents' sources of information about education from outside their child's school ( $n = 684$ )....	143

## Figures

Figure 1	Principals' views of being able to get timely and appropriate advice ( $n = 180$ ) .....	16
Figure 2	Principals' views about ERO ( $n = 180$ ) .....	19
Figure 3	Teachers' views of the importance and frequency of learning experiences in their classrooms ( $n = 713$ ) .....	36
Figure 4	Teachers' views on how often their students were involved in taking responsibility for their learning ( $n = 713$ ) .....	38
Figure 5	Parents' views about how well they think their youngest child's school is helping them to develop key competencies ( $n = 684$ ) .....	40
Figure 6	Trustees' views of the National Standards.....	45
Figure 7	Parents' views of National Standards .....	46
Figure 8	Teachers' views of National Standards ( $n = 713$ ).....	51
Figure 9	Principals' views of National Standards ( $n = 180$ ) .....	52
Figure 10	School approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour: school level ( $n = 180$ ).....	56
Figure 11	School approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour: classroom teaching and support programmes ( $n = 180$ ) .....	57
Figure 12	School approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour: student involvement ( $n = 180$ ) .....	58
Figure 13	Teachers' views on their students' use of ICT: effects on students ( $n = 713$ ) .....	68
Figure 14	Effects for teachers of the use of ICT in their classes ( $n = 713$ ) .....	69
Figure 15	Principals' views about the effective use of their school's Student Management System (SMS) ( $n = 180$ ).....	70
Figure 16	Teachers' views on their effective use of their school's SMS in relation to student achievement ( $n = 713$ ) .....	71

Figure 17 Teachers' views on their effective use of their school's SMS in relation to student behaviour ( <i>n</i> = 713) .....	72
Figure 18 Principals' views of their work ( <i>n</i> = 180) .....	86
Figure 19 Sharing between teachers ( <i>n</i> = 713).....	96
Figure 20 Working together in schools (teachers, <i>n</i> = 713) .....	97
Figure 21 Data analysis and targets (teachers, <i>n</i> = 713).....	98
Figure 22 Feedback and reflection in teaching practice (teachers, <i>n</i> = 713) .....	99
Figure 23 School ways of working: professional considerations (teachers, <i>n</i> = 713) .....	100
Figure 24 Professional learning opportunities in schools (teachers, <i>n</i> = 713).....	101
Figure 25 Use of inquiry to improve teaching practice (teachers <i>n</i> = 713) .....	102
Figure 26 Gains from professional learning in terms of practical help for priority learners (teachers, <i>n</i> = 713).....	102
Figure 27 Access to external support and advice (teachers, <i>n</i> = 713) .....	103
Figure 28 Principals' views of the board contribution to the school and the support needed ( <i>n</i> = 180).....	121
Figure 29 Working relations: principals' views of their boards ( <i>n</i> = 180) .....	122
Figure 30 The role of student achievement data in board decision making: principals' views ( <i>n</i> = 180) ...	123
Figure 31 Parents' views of their child's sense of belonging and safety at the school ( <i>n</i> = 684).....	132
Figure 32 Parents' views of their child's teachers ( <i>n</i> = 684).....	133
Figure 33 Parents' views of their child's school and progress ( <i>n</i> = 684) .....	134
Figure 34 Parents' views about school support for their child's development of key competencies ( <i>n</i> = 684) .....	136
Figure 35 Parents' views about school support for their child's development for the future ( <i>n</i> = 684) .....	137
Figure 36 Parents' views about quality of school information about their child ( <i>n</i> = 684) .....	139
Figure 37 Parents' reports of clear information included in their child's 2013 mid-year report ( <i>n</i> = 684) .	141

# 1. Introduction

This report presents the main findings from NZCER's latest survey of primary and intermediate schools, undertaken in July and August 2013. NZCER began regular national surveys of primary and intermediate schools in 1989 to track the implementation and effects of the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy. We have continued them in order to provide a regular national picture of what is happening in our schools and classes, and how this relates to any policy changes.

The surveys are comprehensive so that we can gain insight into how changes in one aspect of school life are related to changes or continuity in other aspects of school life. They are funded through NZCER's purchase agreement with the Ministry of Education, and are supported by sector groups through their encouragement of members to fill out the surveys. The Ministry and the sector groups also give us very useful feedback on our draft surveys. We carry out the primary and intermediate survey every 3 years, using a different representative sample of around 20 percent of these schools each time.

In 2013 the NZCER National Survey went to the principal, to the board of trustees chair and one other trustee (we asked the board chair to give the survey to someone whose opinion might differ from their own), to a random sample of one in two teachers at a representative sample of 351 primary and intermediate schools,<sup>1</sup> and to a random sample of one in four parents at a cross-section of 36 of these schools. The response rates were 51 percent for principals ( $n = 180$ ), 40 percent for teachers ( $n = 713$ ), 40 percent for trustees ( $n = 277$ ) and 34 percent for parents ( $n = 684$ ). There is some under-representation of principals and trustees from decile 1–2 schools and small schools, some under-representation of teachers from decile 3–6 schools,<sup>2</sup> and over-representation of teachers from decile 9–10 schools. Parent responses are fairly evenly spread over deciles, albeit with low numbers for decile 7–8 schools.

The margin of error for the principals' responses is 7.3 percent, for teachers' responses around 3.5 percent, and for trustees' responses around 5.9 percent. These margins of error are based on the survey sample having a simple random sampling methodology. As both the teacher and trustee samples are not true simple random samples, these figures are approximations. The margin of error for the parent surveys cannot be approximated because the random sample is taken from a cross-section of the sample schools.

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<sup>1</sup> See M. Berg, (2013). *Sampling methods for the NZCER Primary National Survey*. Paper presented at the 2013 NZARE conference, Dunedin. Retrieved from <http://www.nzcer.org.nz>.

<sup>2</sup> We group school decile for analytical purposes (usually grouping two deciles together, such as decile 1–2, but sometimes reporting larger groupings, such as decile 3–6, where there is consistency in the large grouping).

Comparisons are reported between 2013 and 2010 responses where there are differences indicating a change over time. Also reported are statistically significant differences in responses related to socioeconomic decile, which is the school characteristic most likely to be associated with different experiences. We have also reported some differences related to school location (urban, covering main cities; provincial, covering small cities and towns; and rural) and school size. Schools with 100 or fewer students are defined as small, 101 to 200 students as small–medium, 201 to 350 students as medium–large, and 351 or more students as large. We also report differences related to parental ethnicity in the chapter on parents.

The report covers key aspects of school experiences. We start by focusing on school resources, and the support and challenge schools receive in their interactions with government agencies. Then we look at what is happening with *The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)*,<sup>3</sup> legally required of schools in 2010, with many schools starting work with it from 2007; at what is happening with the National Standards, introduced in 2010; at the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in schools; and then at how schools are supporting student wellbeing and behaviour. We end this first part of the report with a brief chapter on the challenges that principals, teachers, trustees and parents identified as facing their school.

In the second part of the report we focus on each of the four groups we surveyed, starting with teachers, then moving on to principals, trustees and parents.

## Some key findings

Our primary and intermediate schools were in mixed health in 2013. Parents' views of the quality of their child's education remained positive, with a small increase in those reporting clearer information on their children's progress. Only 6 percent could not access the school of their first choice, indicating that lack of school choice is not a major issue in our education provision.

Trustees seemed more confident about their responsibilities than in 2010. Key elements in their perceived role as trustees were setting a strategic direction, supporting school staff, and representing parents, rather than employing principals or acting as agents of government. Forty-four percent of trustees would like more training or support, and most saw the Ministry of Education as having a role in advising and working with them. Parents appeared to be raising more issues with school boards—more in relation to student behaviour, school access, resources and property than to student achievement. Continuity in school boards across the May 2013 triennial board elections was reasonably high: only 20 percent of boards lost four or more of their previous members.

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Fourteen percent of principals thought their board was merely coping (29 percent of decile 1–2 school principals thought this). Principals were largely positive about their boards adding value to the school, but 46 percent also thought they required a lot of school management support to do so.

Principals and teachers continued to have high levels of enjoyment of the work they do, but they were becoming over-stretched. This was indicated by slippages in principal and teacher morale and increases in stress levels since 2010. Attention to National Standards work saw some positive reports of professional learning, particularly in the use of moderation and teachers working together more, but on the whole principals and teachers did not find that their National Standards work was improving student achievement. They remained sceptical about the Standards achieving this purpose.

The survey provides some evidence that it is difficult for primary and intermediate schools to make further progress on *NZC* on their own, without more coherent and available support and systematic ways to share and build knowledge. Changes in teaching practice and the ways teachers work together were evident between 2007 and 2010, but further progress seems to have stalled. ICT and e-learning—a focus for many schools—were positively viewed, but here, too, there was no progress evident from 2010 in the ways that might really change learning. What had increased was the use of ICT for students to practise skills, a use consistent with the focus on National Standards.

School resources remained stretched. Only 11 percent of primary and intermediate principals thought their government operational funding met their school’s needs, the same as in 2010. School budgets were variable, sometimes making planning difficult. Perhaps linked to the greater expectations that schools will raise student achievement was a marked decrease in the proportion of principals who believed their school’s teaching staffing entitlement is adequate: 29 percent thought this in 2013, compared with 48 percent in 2010.

While most schools had some interaction with other schools, and more were clustering to pool resources for administrative support (26 percent, compared with 10 percent in 2010), 59 percent of schools reported direct competition for students. Enrolment zones appeared to protect the rolls of some schools while allowing them to take students from other schools’ areas, with 41 percent of schools with enrolment zones taking at least a fifth of their students from outside their own zone. Sixteen percent of primary principals were spending more on marketing or other aspects of their school than they would like in order to encourage enrolments.

Decile 1–2 schools continued to face greater difficulties with filling teaching positions with good staff, school competition and student mobility.

Overall, the Ministry of Education appears to be undertaking more local work with schools than in 2010. Principals’ views of this work show a wider variation than one would want for interactions that should be providing schools with robust information, advice and challenge. Senior advisers, assigned to provide a single point of contact and advice, did not have high continuity, and fewer than half the principals thought their senior adviser understood their school

or primary/intermediate education. Not many had gained new and useful ideas from their senior advisers, or useful advice on the Government's flagship policies addressing the needs of priority learners.

Principals tended to be critical of the new allocation process for Ministry-funded professional development, which is more restrictive than previously. Responses on the quality of the Ministry of Education professional development undertaken by schools showed more favourable than unfavourable views, particularly in relation to its changing teaching practice and among those in decile 1–2 schools. On the whole, primary and intermediate principals were open to more work with the Ministry, though doubts were evident in relation to principal appointment and review, and property.

The need for schools to have more access to external expertise and knowledge was marked, particularly for *NZC* areas that are not English or mathematics and statistics, in relation to priority learners, the new frontier of e-learning, and how schools can make the best use of their resources, use data to improve teaching and learning, work effectively, and work as learning organisations.

## 2. School resources and relations with other educational services

In this chapter we cover principals' perspectives on their school: the school's funding and staffing, enrolments and student mobility, its relations with the early childhood education (ECE) services or schools its students come from and the schools its students go to, and its interactions with other schools.

### Funding and staffing

Funding continued to top the list of challenges that people in schools identified (see chapter 7 for details). Only 11 percent of primary and intermediate principals believed their school's government funding was enough to meet its needs, the same proportion as in 2010. School finances, largely shaped by school rolls, showed some volatility, with only 30 percent of principals reporting that 2013 was looking much the same as 2012. Schools that were looking at a better financial year in 2013 than 2012 (33 percent) could do so mostly because they had reduced spending, increased locally raised funds, or had an unexpected roll increase. Schools that were looking at a worse financial year in 2013 (41 percent)<sup>4</sup> were faced with an increase in fixed costs, costs arising from the fraught introduction of the new payroll system, Novopay, an unexpected roll decrease, or a drop in school donations or fee payments.

Donations asked of parents ranged from \$8 to \$600 per child. They increased with school decile. The median asked in decile 1–2 schools was \$25, with a median payment rate of 20 percent. In decile 9–10 schools the median donation asked was \$145, with a median payment rate of 80 percent.

Twenty-nine percent of primary principals believed their school's teaching staffing entitlement was enough to meet the school's needs, a drop from the 48 percent who believed this in 2010. Most schools were funding additional teaching staff, mostly to teach an additional class (36 percent), provide literacy or numeracy support (33 percent), or work with students with special needs or needing learning assistance (22 percent, down from 31 percent in 2010). There was also a drop in the additional employment of teachers working with extension or GATE (gifted and talented) students (9 percent, down from 16 percent in 2010), and those employed to work with ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) students (9 percent, down from 14 percent in

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<sup>4</sup> The figures sum to 104 percent. Some principals indicated both that their financial year was looking much the same, and that they were looking at a worse or better financial year than 2012.

2010). One area of increase was in ICT support: from 7 percent of schools in 2010 to 12 percent in 2013.

It had become easier for primary schools to find suitable teachers to fill vacancies: in 2013, 29 percent had some difficulty, compared with 44 percent in 2010. Decile 1–2 schools were the most likely to experience difficulty (52 percent did so).

Eighteen percent experienced difficulty generally in finding suitable staff, and 11 percent were finding it difficult to find suitable people to teach te reo Māori. The main reasons continued to be a limited number of suitable applicants, the remote or rural location of the school, a shortage of teachers who can speak and teach te reo Māori, and the low socioeconomic area served by the school.

Although it had become generally easier for schools to recruit teachers, the proportion of primary schools that experienced difficulty finding suitable teachers for senior or middle management roles (18 percent) was much the same as in 2010.

## School roll and relations with other schools and ECE services

In a system based on stand-alone schools, each school is responsible for its own viability in terms of roll numbers. Relationships between local schools can therefore be competitive. Most schools also have some ongoing relationships with other schools, including those that help to secure a good transition for students to and from each school, but these relationships are voluntary and variable.

### Roll numbers and competition

Judging by the national surveys, there has been very little overall change in primary and intermediate schools' ability to accommodate all of their enrolment applications since 2007. In 2013, 69 percent of principals had sufficient space for all students who applied to enrol at their school, with only 4 percent indicating they had difficulty accommodating enrolments during the school year. Almost a quarter of principals did not have sufficient space for all students who applied.

Clear decile-related differences were evident, with 95 percent of decile 1–2 schools able to accommodate all new students, compared with 54 percent of decile 9–10 schools. Probably also related to decile, small schools were more likely to be able to accept enrolments (86 percent) than large schools (49 percent).

Thirty-five percent of the schools whose principals responded to the survey had an enrolment scheme in place to prevent over-crowding. Enrolment schemes are related to decile, school size and location: only 5 percent of decile 1–2 schools had one, compared with 59 percent of decile 9–10 schools; 9 percent of small schools compared with 68 percent of large schools; and 19 percent

of rural schools compared with 47 percent of urban schools. However, most schools with enrolment schemes were taking students who lived outside their enrolment zone. Forty-one percent of these schools had over a fifth of their students living beyond the school's zone.

Over half (59 percent) the principals indicated that their schools competed directly with other schools for students, and for decile 1–2 schools the figure was even higher (81 percent). The median number of schools that principals reported they were directly competing with was three. Schools they believed they were in competition with were most likely to be within a 30-minute drive and more likely to be in the same socioeconomic decile (68 percent of those reporting direct competition) or a higher decile (46 percent), than a lower decile (33 percent) or a private school (23 percent).

Rural schools were more likely than urban schools to be able to accommodate all enrolment applications; just 7 percent of rural schools were unable to accept all enrolments, compared with 36 percent of urban schools. Provincial schools (63 percent) were more likely than rural schools (27 percent) to compete with higher-decile schools within 30 minutes' driving distance.

Three-quarters of schools had a similar student demographic profile to their local community. A quarter of schools had more students from lower-income families than principals thought typical of their local community. Twenty-one percent of schools had a greater proportion of special needs students than in their community, and for large schools this figure was 34 percent. Thirteen percent of principals thought their school was attended by more Māori students than lived in the local community, and 8 percent thought their school was attended by more Pasifika students than lived in the local community.

Decile 1–2 schools were most likely to have more students from lower-income families and more Pasifika students than lived in the school's local community. Decile 7–10 schools were less likely to have more Māori students than principals thought lived in the school's local community.

Principals identified what actions they took to encourage students to enrol in their school. Table 1 shows that, for many principals, school promotion is related to the quality and extent of provision. ICT use was seen as being attractive. Principals also thought it important to provide attractive buildings and grounds. Good relations with local ECE services were seen as important. While many were aware of the value of the local newspaper in terms of showcasing their school, few principals reported much of a direct emphasis on marketing. (The proportions who reported some direct marketing were much lower than was found in NZCER's 2012 National Secondary Survey.<sup>5</sup> (Wylie, 2013, p.7). Sixteen percent of primary principals were spending more on marketing or other aspects of their school than they would like in order to encourage enrolments.

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<sup>5</sup> C. Wylie (2013). *Secondary schools in 2012. Main findings from the NZCER national survey*. Wellington: NZCER.

Table 1 School actions to encourage enrolments, reported by principals (n = 180)

Action	%
Try to provide a safe environment for students and teachers	92
Maintain good appearance of school grounds and buildings	85
Try to ensure students experience good support so they tell others	78
Maintain spending on professional development to support quality of teaching	78
Maintain good relationships with local ECE services (or local primary schools in the case of an intermediate school)	74
Offer as wide-ranging a curriculum as we can afford	66
Promote the school in local community / local newspaper	64
Emphasise student use of ICT	52
Offer enrichment programmes for high-achieving students	39
Cite extracurricular activities and successes in advertisements/material going to ECE services or feeder schools	31
Spend more on marketing and school promotion than I would like	9
Take care in setting enrolment zone boundaries	8
Spend more on some aspects of the school than other areas that are probably more important	8
Spend more on school property than I would like	6
Cite National Standards results in advertisements/material going to ECE services or feeder schools	2

Comparing schools by size, 80 percent of small-school principals promoted their school in the local community or newspaper, compared with 49 percent of large-school principals. Looking at school decile, principals of decile 1–2 schools were more likely to promote their school within their local community or newspaper and to maintain good relationships with local ECE services (81 percent for both, compared with around 60 percent for both for decile 9–10), whereas principals of decile 9–10 schools were most likely to offer enrichment programmes for high-achieving students (46 percent, compared with 29 percent for decile 1–2 schools). Interestingly, principals of decile 1–2 schools were more likely to encourage enrolments at their school by emphasising students' use of ICT (62 percent, compared with 44 percent of decile 9–10).

## Student mobility

Student turnover within a school year has been a perennial concern for schools. Fifty-six percent of the principals said that student mobility and transience posed issues for their school: 17 percent generally and 39 percent sometimes. It was very much an issue related to the socioeconomic community served by a school: student mobility was a general issue for 43 percent of the decile 1–2 schools, decreasing to none of the decile 9–10 schools.

Comments made by just under half the principals on the issues arising from student mobility and transience were mainly about the additional work for the school, the learning or behaviour challenges students who were highly mobile could bring with them, and the negative impact they could have on the school's achievement results, the need to re-allocate resources to meet these students' needs, and frustration that the work done to meet these students' needs could seem wasted if they moved again. Principals' comments included:

Transient students, especially those who have attended a number of schools, often arrive with poor levels of academic achievement and progress. Often we have to redirect resources for these students.

Children just get accepted for the RTLB [Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour] etc. and then leave. They return many months later and the process starts again. Children develop gaps in their learning. Children are often unsettled. We don't have data to compare over time.

Sometimes children arrive with a myriad of complex social behaviour, and learning issues which take time to get settled. We often feel we just get started then they leave again.

We have up to a third of students change schools during any one year. This impacts on our annual targets, assessment and reporting.

I have enrolled 105 students this year for a net gain of 24 students. This number of students coming and going creates a lot of administration work but significantly is extremely disruptive to both the transient students and the others at school.

Learning programmes are disrupted for stable students. Often a higher level of poverty & need e.g., stationery, clothing, food. Extra stress on teacher. Time take to settle 'unsettled' children. Increased behavioural & social issues. Extra time needed for planning, assessing etc. Impacts are felt administratively and on resourcing. Impacts on school results.

For the National Survey we used the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) definition of transience: attending two or more schools in the course of a year. Only 69 percent of the principals responding answered the question asking for numbers of students in this category; those who did not answer probably did not have the specific information to hand rather than having no students who fitted this category. The median number of students who had attended two or more schools in the course of a year was 11 per school, ranging from none to 147.

Most of these students had not attended another local school in the same year (the median number of students who had was three). Thus it seems that while some schools have had some success in assuring families that changes of home within a geographical area do not have to mean a change of school, other strategies might be needed to retain some continuity in the schooling of students in families who need to move between areas.

Recently reported Ministry of Education figures on "average student movement rate"—the number of children coming or going within a year, excluding students starting or completing their

schooling—give an average student movement rate of 53 percent for decile 1 primary schools and 30 percent for decile 10 primary schools.<sup>6</sup> These do seem rather high figures.

Thirty-nine schools also gave figures for their students who were homeless:<sup>7</sup> 43 percent of the decile 1–2 schools had such students, compared with 7 percent of the decile 9–10 schools. The median number of homeless students was four for the schools reporting such students, with a range from 2 to 19.

## Schools working together

Professional learning was the focus of much of the joint work that schools did with other schools: 72 percent belonged to a professional learning cluster of some kind. Ministry-funded clusters supported joint work for 14 percent of schools through the Learning and Change networks, and for 9 percent of schools through a PB4L [Positive Behaviour for Learning, a key Ministry of Education strategy to improve student behaviour and school engagement] school-wide cluster. Some previously Ministry-funded clusters were continuing voluntarily: 15 percent of schools were part of continuing ICT clusters, 7 percent were part of a continuing EHSAS (Extending High Standards Across Schools) cluster, and 6 percent were part of a Network Learning Community. In 2010, 28 percent of schools had been part of ICT clusters, 22 percent part of Network Learning Communities (both forms of cluster then Ministry-funded), and 19 percent part of EHSAS clusters, whose funding had ended. The ICT clusters appear to have been the most sustainable, perhaps because they had a clearer purpose, with some infrastructure of support.

In contrast, in 2013 more schools took part in administrative support clusters that could pool resources to provide services that individual schools could not afford or keep viable on their own: 26 percent, compared with 10 percent in 2010.

School staff also visited colleagues in other schools to learn from each other (43 percent). Inter-school moderation of overall teacher judgements for National Standards occurred for 28 percent of schools, up from 13 percent in 2010. A slightly higher proportion (39 percent) of rural schools moderated their National Standards assessments with other schools.

Schools also joined other schools to meet with social agencies (often to press for more support) (29 percent, the same proportion as did so in 2010), to place individual students who were having difficulty in a particular school with another school (14 percent, much the same as in 2010), or to reduce truancy (9 percent, down from 21 percent in 2010). Decile 1–2 schools were most likely to take part in these kinds of individual student-centred joint work.

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<sup>6</sup> B. Heather (2104, 26 March). Kids dragged from school to school. *Dominion Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/9867525/Kids-dragged-from-school-to-school>.

<sup>7</sup> Based on the following definition: sharing accommodation with another family or living in temporary accommodation such as refuges, boarding houses, campgrounds, sleeping in cars, etc.

Three-quarters of the principals responding to the survey expressed an interest in establishing new or additional working relationships with other schools for various purposes. This proportion was similar to 2007, but a little lower than the 84 percent in 2010 (when principals were particularly interested in more joint learning relating to the new National Standards).

In 2013, principals indicated interest in working with other schools to gain and share knowledge and resources, and, to a lesser extent, to work differently, in more collaborative modes. They were interested in working with other schools to:

- share professional development (66 percent)
- learn how other schools tackle the issues they face (35 percent)
- gain access to new funding sources (34 percent)
- share ways of effectively promoting student wellbeing and positive behaviour (33 percent)
- work together to improve the quality of students' transition to intermediate (or secondary) school (33 percent)
- share specialist facilities or equipment (30 percent)
- have a stronger voice with social agencies (25 percent)
- analyse local achievement and attendance data to suggest priorities for schools in the area (24 percent)
- develop resources relevant to local curriculum (22 percent)
- work on curriculum areas where the school wanted to do things differently (22 percent)
- provide more curriculum areas than the school could do on its own (16 percent)
- have access to more efficient administrative support (12 percent)
- place students having difficulty at one school into another school (9 percent)
- work together to lessen truancy (9 percent)
- share governance (3 percent).

In addition, responses to a separate item relating to National Standards showed that 57 percent of principals and 55 percent of teachers thought the Ministry should support neighbouring schools to work together to moderate overall teacher judgements that teachers make about students' achievement in relation to National Standards.

Principals of decile 1–2 schools were less interested in new or additional working relationships with other schools (29 percent said no and 19 percent were not sure); this may reflect the current priority they have for receiving Ministry support. They were also less interested in joining with other schools to access new funding sources (19 percent). However, they were as keen as others to develop resources for local curriculum areas or to do things differently in a curriculum area through joint work. Of less interest to decile 9–10 school principals was working with other schools to have a stronger voice with social agencies, to lessen truancy, or to improve the quality of transition to the next level of schooling.

## **Transitions into and from primary and intermediate schools**

To ensure good transitions from ECE services to primary school, 77 percent of principals said they worked closely with their local ECE services for students with special education needs, and 73 percent did so for other students. Twenty-one percent of principals said their children came from too many ECE services for the school to work with each of these services to ensure a good transition to primary school, and 1 percent said there were no local ECE services near their school.

At least half the schools in the survey were in localities that did not have kōhanga reo or Pasifika language nests (50 percent and 65 percent, respectively). For those that were, there were consistently greater proportions who disagreed than agreed that they worked closely with kōhanga reo and Pasifika language nests to ensure good transitions for children—the opposite of the situation for ECE services in general. Only 49 percent of schools with local kōhanga reo could provide continuity for these children in terms of their learning, and only 18 percent of schools with local Pasifika language nests could provide their children with continuity in terms of learning their Pasifika language.

Student transitions *from* the schools also usually included liaison with local schools at the next level. Eighty-seven percent of principals said they worked closely with local intermediate or secondary schools to ensure good transitions for their students with special education needs, and 80 percent did so for their general student population. But, again, the picture was different in relation to transition from bilingual provision to secondary schools or wharekura: schools with such provision were in the minority. Only 11 percent of principals said they worked closely to ensure a good transition for tamariki from the school’s bilingual units or classes, and 13 percent said they did not. Two percent of principals said they worked closely with local wharekura to ensure a good transition from their school’s bilingual provision, and 11 percent said they did not.

These questions about transitions are new to the NZCER National Survey. Elsewhere in the survey a third of principals indicated their interest in developing relationships with additional local schools to improve the quality of students’ transitions to intermediate and secondary schools. The information here suggests that the transition of Māori students from bilingual provision and transition from Pasifika language nests warrants particular attention.

## **Summary**

Despite some improvements to school operational funding since 2010, principals’ views of the adequacy of their government funding remained unchanged, with only 11 percent finding it sufficient for their school’s needs. Only 29 percent of primary and intermediate principals believed their school’s teaching staffing entitlement was adequate, a marked drop from 48 percent who thought so in 2010. This may point to the greater expectations of schools to improve student achievement voiced in the last 3 years.

Decile 1–2 schools continued to face greater difficulties in relation to filling teaching positions with good staff, school competition and student mobility. Student mobility appeared to occur less within a local area than across geographical areas, raising questions about how best to provide the continuity in student learning and support that principals expressed concern about in relation to transient students.

Direct competition between schools for students was experienced by 59 percent of primary and intermediate schools. Enrolment zones appeared to protect the rolls of some schools while allowing them to take students from other schools' areas, with 41 percent of schools with enrolment zones taking at least a fifth of their students from outside their own zone. Sixteen percent of primary principals were spending more on marketing or other aspects of their school than they would like in order to encourage enrolments.

- Most schools were interacting, mainly to share professional learning. More schools were clustering to pool resources for administrative support (26 percent compared with 10 percent in 2010), and more schools were moderating National Standards overall teacher judgements (28 percent compared with 13 percent in 2010). Three-quarters of the principals said they would like to extend their working relations with other schools.
- Most primary and intermediate schools also worked closely with local ECE services, where they existed, to ensure children made a good start at their school, although 21 percent reported their children came from too many ECE services to do this. They usually liaised with schools at the next level to ensure good transitions. However, such inter-service liaison to ensure good transitions into and out of primary and intermediate schools for Māori or Pasifika students coming or going from full-immersion or bilingual units was less frequent.



### 3. Support and challenge for schools

Although New Zealand schools are self-managing, they are part of a national system, albeit one that has operated in a far more fragmented way since 1989 than in other countries.<sup>8</sup> Like schools anywhere, they need to experience both support and challenge to develop, and to be able to meet rising expectations on the part of government and parents of what education can do. In this chapter we describe principals' experiences with the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office (ERO), the national planning and reporting framework, and the availability of external expertise.

#### Interaction with education agencies and sector organisations

Schools need to engage with education agencies and sector organisations. Some of this engagement is focused on the school seeking information, advice, support and resources, and some is focused on the education agencies' requirements of schools (e.g., to provide information relating to school reporting or funding).

We asked principals about their receipt of timely and appropriate advice from 15 education agencies and sector organisations (see Figure 1). Sector organisations and the RTLB service, which provides support for students with moderate special education needs at the local level, were most likely to be experienced as providing timely and appropriate advice. The Ministry of Education's closest office was seen more positively as a source of timely and appropriate advice (68 percent) than the Ministry of Education national office (48 percent). Agencies providing services or resources for students with high needs in terms of engaging them in education, such as the new attendance service or Child, Youth and Family (CYF), were seen less positively.

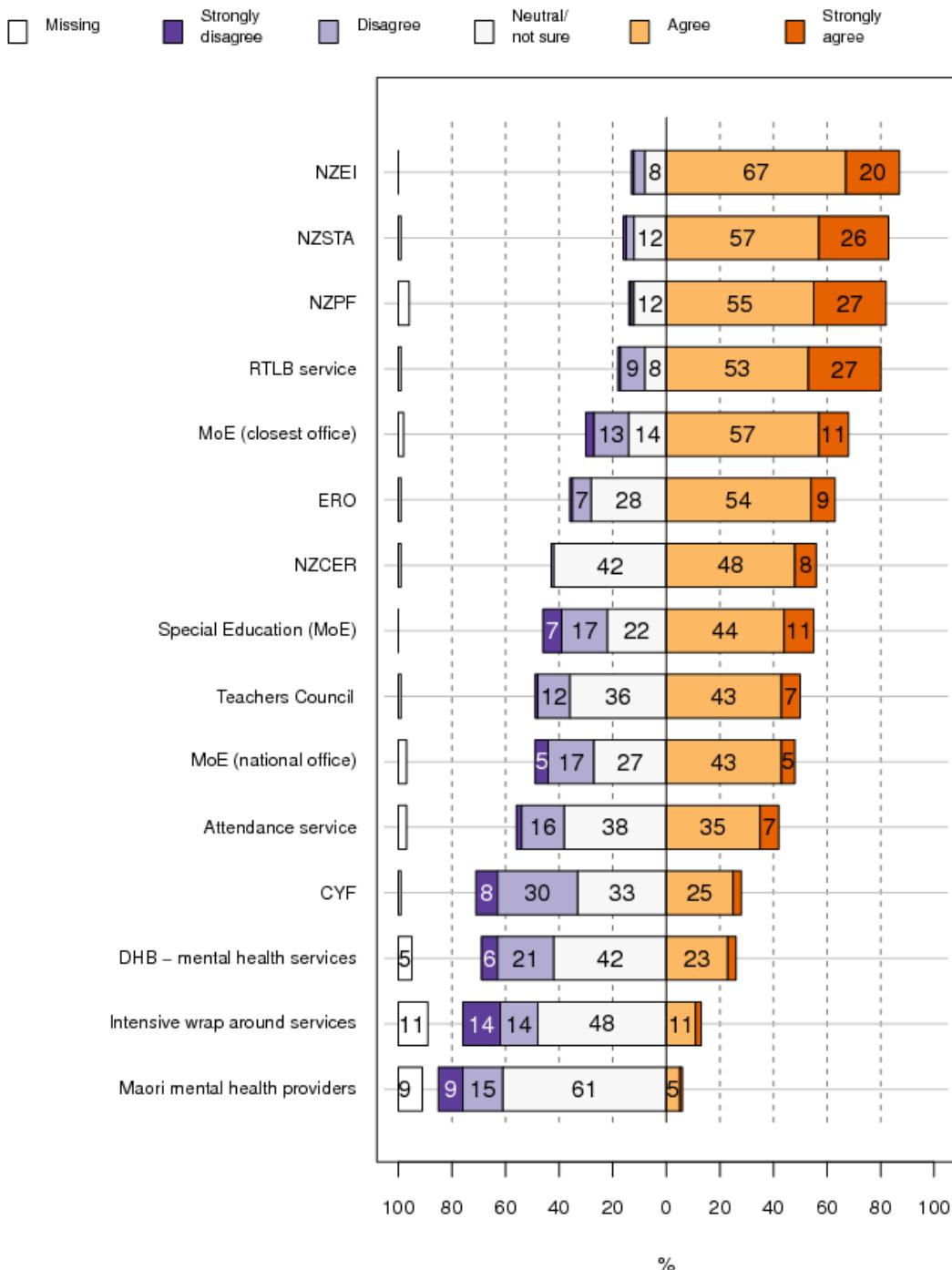
Views of the timeliness and appropriateness of the advice they received were much the same as in 2010, with some exceptions. In 2013, 63 percent of principals thought ERO gave them timely and appropriate advice, compared with 47 percent in 2010, and the 68 percent who thought their closest Ministry of Education office gave them such advice in 2013 was down on the 79 percent in 2010.

Overall, these proportions are not as high as they would need to be to indicate a system that was working well, ensuring that school leaders had the information or advice they needed to carry out their roles effectively and efficiently.

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<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the cumulative effects of the shift to self-managed schools in 1989, see C. Wylie (2012). *Vital Connections*. Wellington: NZCER Press.

Figure 1 Principals' views of being able to get timely and appropriate advice ( $n = 180$ )



Notes: NZEI = New Zealand Educational Institute; NZSTA = New Zealand School Trustees Association; NZPF = NZ Principals' Federation; RTLB = Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour; MoE = Ministry of Education; ERO = Education Review Office; CYF = Child, Youth and Family; DHB = District Health Board.

All principals are required to provide information to government education agencies in order to access funding and resources, or report to fulfil legislative requirements. Views that providing

information is too time-consuming were most likely to be expressed in relation to the Ministry of Education (65 percent thought this of its national office, up from 40 percent in 2010, and 56 percent of their closest Ministry of Education office, up from 26 percent in 2010); ERO (44 percent, up from 37 percent in 2010); and Special Education (43 percent, much the same as in 2010). The increase in the view that meeting the Ministry's information requirements is too time-consuming is likely to be related to the greater emphasis since 2010 on schools' annual reporting against their charter targets, and student progress and achievement in relation to the National Standards.

However, principals were largely positive about the annual planning and reporting cycle that was introduced in 2001 to focus schools on strategic planning and self-review: 91 percent said they would be using something like the current school planning and reporting cycle even if they were not required to do so. They saw the cycle as helping them to focus their resources and energy (85 percent) and as a useful way to get school goals shared across different levels of the school (82 percent). Seventy-seven percent of principals responding to the survey thought that their school's current planning and reporting targets were "stretching" or challenging.

Yet even with the increased Ministry of Education focus on school reporting, 64 percent of principals thought that no-one outside the school took much notice of their annual plan or report. Within the school, progress on school targets played a major part in principal performance appraisal for only 52 percent, though it was more likely to do so in decile 1–2 schools (71 percent), which have had additional Ministry support to raise student achievement.

There was some slippage since 2010 in the proportion of principals who strongly agreed with the statements we asked them to respond to about: the annual planning and reporting cycle in terms of using it if they were not required to, focusing resources and energy, finding it a useful way to get school goals shared, and having stretching or challenging targets.

## **Experiences with ERO reviews**

Education Review Office (ERO) reviews are the system's current form of national accountability. Most principals responding found that their most recent ERO review affirmed their approach and provided parents with assurance about the quality of the school. New learning for the school was more likely to take the form of advice on fine-tuning school systems rather than substantial change. Both kinds of learning have increased since 2010, as Table 2 shows. Stress related to ERO reviews had almost halved since 2010, though this improvement may relate in part to the higher proportion of schools responding that were given at least a 3-year return time from their most recent ERO review (95 percent in 2013, compared with 87 percent in 2010, for reviews over the previous 3 years). Over the 2010–13 period ERO review reports may have also become less useable to promote or market schools (which was not their intended use).

**Table 2 Principals' views on the outcomes of their school's last ERO review**

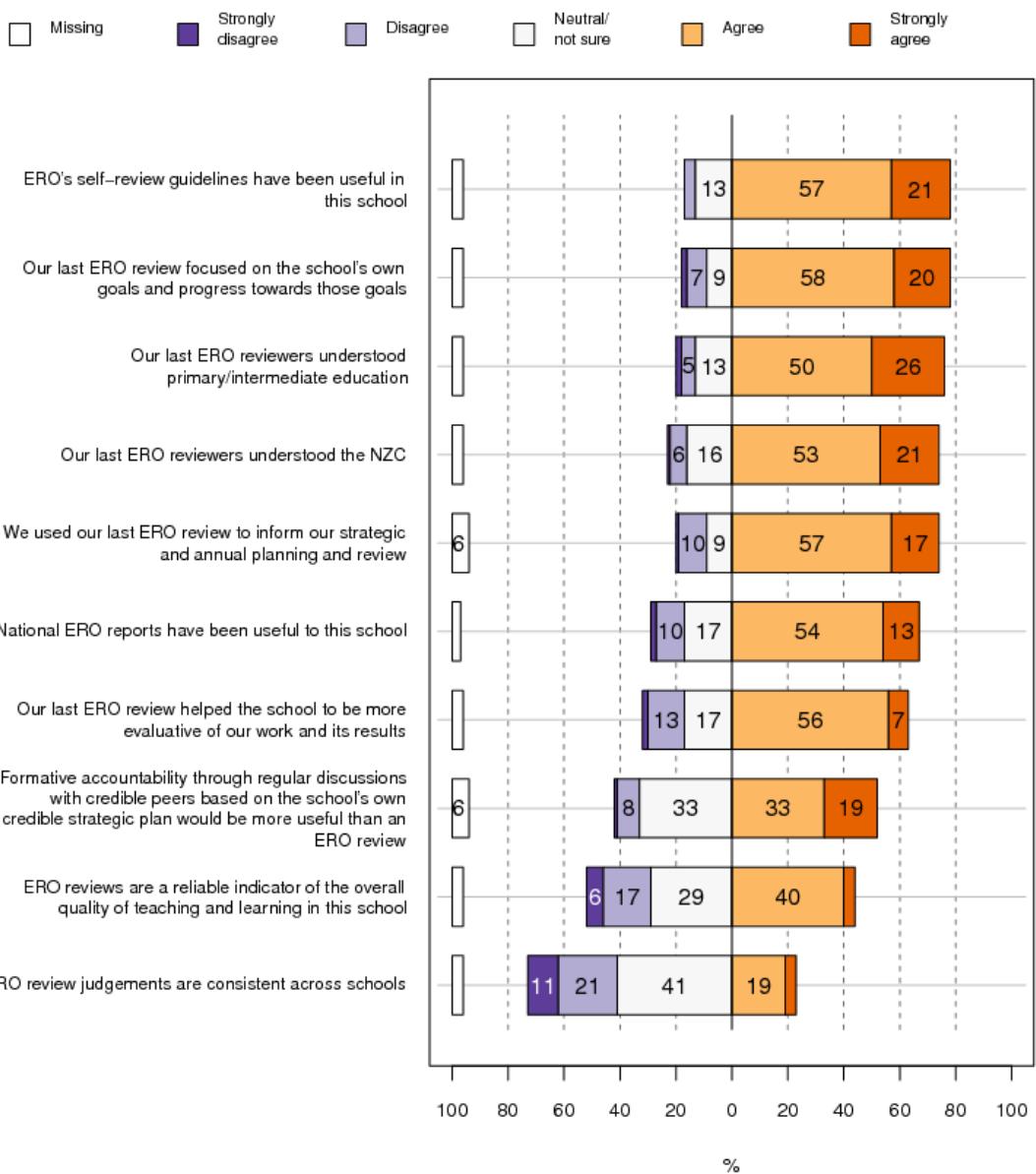
	<b>2007 % (n = 196)</b>	<b>2010 % (n = 198)</b>	<b>2013 % (n = 180)</b>
It affirmed our approach	76	77	76
Reassurance for parents about the quality of the school	*	66	68
We got some useful 'fine-tuning' advice on our systems	*	55	64
We saw some things in a new light, it is leading/has led to positive changes in teaching and learning	30	17	24
Stress	**	39	22
Something we could use to promote/market our school	*	35	22
It helped me get some needed changes in the school	28	25	22
Diverted us from our priorities	*	11	11
We felt pressure to change what we were doing without seeing the value of that change	6	10	7
Helped get the school some additional support/resources from MoE	4	1	5

\* = Not asked; \*\* = Not asked in same way

Sixty-three percent of principals thought they could get timely and appropriate advice from ERO, up from 47 percent in 2010. Forty-four percent thought that it took too much time to provide the data and information required by ERO, somewhat more than the 37 percent who thought this in 2010.

Primary and intermediate principals were generally positive about their *own* experience of ERO reviews, as Figure 2 shows. Most thought ERO reviewers understood NZC and primary or intermediate education. There is something of a paradox in that while 69 percent of principals said that national ERO reports had been useful in their school, they were unsure about the consistency of the judgements that had fed into those reports: only 23 percent thought that review judgements were consistent across schools, and 44 percent that ERO reviews were a reliable indicator of the overall quality of teaching and learning at their own school. This level of uncertainty was much the same in 2010, and suggests a need for ERO to provide more information about how reviewers make or moderate their judgements, and the basis for them. The question of consistency across schools may also reflect differences in the focus of each ERO review, which differs from year to year in relation to current government priorities, as well as including an area the school identifies as a current strategic focus.

Figure 2 Principals' views about ERO ( $n = 180$ )



Half the principals indicated that they would prefer to have ongoing discussions and formative feedback from a credible peer, with the school's strategic plan as a reference point, rather than a 3- to 5-year review cycle. This is much the same proportion as thought so in 2010 and 2007, indicating that though ERO reviews have changed since 2007, and principals are generally positive about their experience with ERO, the time-lag between reviews may work against them providing the new learning that schools could use.

## Interaction with the local Ministry of Education

Local Ministry of Education offices had three new roles added in 2011, with the aim of providing more support for schools and bridging the gap between schools and the Ministry that has been inherent in the New Zealand approach to self-managed schools. *Senior adviser* roles were intended to provide schools with a single point of contact, who would work more closely with them, particularly in relation to their charter, annual plan and report. Continuity in these roles was not high. Only 34 percent of schools had had only one senior adviser over the previous 2 years. Thirty-two percent had had two senior advisers, 15 percent had worked with three, and 2 percent with four or more.

Sixty-three percent of the principals said their current senior adviser had been helpful, though only 42 percent thought that this person understood their school, and 36 percent that they understood primary/intermediate education. Senior advisers were not commonly the source of new and useful ideas (26 percent of principals said their senior adviser was), though this was higher in decile 1–2 schools (52 percent). Nor were they commonly the source of useful advice on government flagship policies addressing the needs of priority learners: 14 percent of principals had had useful advice about *Ka Hikitia* [the Māori Education Strategy] from their senior adviser, 7 percent about the Pasifika Education Plan and 9 percent about Success for All (addressing inclusive education). Useful advice on these strategies was more likely to occur for decile 1–2 schools (33 percent, 19 percent, and 24 percent, respectively).

*Student Achievement Function* (SAF) practitioners were intended to work with schools to develop their capacity to improve student achievement, offering their support to schools identified as having low achievement. This can include some additional resourcing. Eighteen percent of principals indicated that they had worked with an SAF practitioner. Most of these were positive about their experiences. Just over half the schools surveyed (53 percent) had not been offered this support, and the figure was higher for rural schools (67 percent) and for decile 9–10 schools (70 percent). Eight percent indicated they would like to have the support of an SAF practitioner. However, 23 percent would not want to have this support in their school, and 5 percent had declined the support when it was offered.

Local Ministry of Education offices were also given the role of *allocating Ministry-funded professional learning* when school support services' contracts were not renewed and the services were reframed to target low student achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy and in relation to priority learners. This allocation process has not bedded in well. Only 11 percent of principals thought the current method of allocating professional development was fairer than the system it replaced in 2011. Twenty-nine percent of principals said the allocation had occurred in time for them to include the professional learning offered to the school in their school planning for 2013. Twenty-four percent of schools had wanted Ministry of Education-allocated

professional learning but had missed out. Ministry allocation matched 39 percent of schools' own priority needs—and 71 percent of decile 1–2 schools' priority needs—but did not do so for 43 percent of the schools.

Views on the quality of the Ministry of Education-allocated professional development were more positive than negative, though the size of the negative views suggests room for improvement and a range of experiences with professional development providers. Forty-two percent of principals said the quality of their current Ministry of Education-allocated professional learning was good; 32 percent said it was not. Forty-six percent of principals said it was improving teaching practice, and 24 percent said it was not.<sup>9</sup>

We invited principals to add a comment about the current Ministry of Education support for schools, and one-third did so. Some made positive comments about people they worked with, but most comments expressed some frustration about the Ministry as an organisation, or Ministry allocation of the professional learning it funded (with high-decile schools particularly feeling they were missing out).

The senior advisor is great, she always rings/contacts back and is able to advise me on a wide range of things. Was proactive in getting in on development contracts. The MoE Property facilitator is also very good BUT totally overworked. This is a very slow frustrating process.

It would be good if people in our local MOE did not keep losing their jobs if they are good. We have lost some superb practical, knowledgeable support.

The MoE has been gutted of most staff who have a background in Primary/Secondary education—hence very little institutional knowledge (probably deliberate and makes MoE easier for Minister to control). Means they are actually incapable of giving advice. They mainly act as ‘policemen’ to see we comply.

The local senior adviser doesn't always know the information himself, so I no longer ask him much.

We only hear from MOE if we have done something wrong. No support offered.

We are desperate for e-learning support. MoE need more facilitators in this area. We have applied each year and missed out.

Our perennial set of questions in the National Survey about the roles that local Ministry of Education offices could or would desirably play with schools showed a marked increase since 2010 in the interaction of these offices with schools. On the whole there was more interest than not in having the Ministry work more with schools. Areas where principals were least convinced that they wanted more interaction with the Ministry were advice on property work (which may reflect tighter parameters in Ministry funding), and advice or support to boards in appointing principals.

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<sup>9</sup> Not all schools took part in Ministry of Education-funded professional development in 2013.

Table 3 Principals' views on roles for their local/regional Ministry of Education office

	Do not want this %			Want this %			Happens now %		
	2007	2010	2013	2007	2010	2013	2007	2010	2013
Consultation on any local/regional changes that could affect our school	3	2	3	71	78	53	23	16	38
Working with principals to establish a local pool of accredited principal appraisers	*	35	29	*	55	52	*	8	13
Support for schools to work together professionally	14	15	8	61	59	48	21	19	38
Allocation of discretionary funds	12	14	12	70	66	40	11	13	38
Working with principals to establish local priorities for action	*	24	21	*	54	34	*	18	36
Support for board in appointing principal	52	42	32	33	35	31	6	11	20
Advice if we encounter a problem	3	3	1	54	50	27	42	46	68
Support if we encounter a problem	2	3	1	63	56	27	33	39	67
Advice on property work	8	9	39	48	43	26	41	44	66
Advice to board on appointing principal	42	42	37	41	33	25	9	12	20
Support with property work	7	10	8	56	49	24	33	38	62
Professional discussions on school's annual report and targets, that feed into school discussion of strategies related to student achievement	37	34	14	44	43	18	16	16	64

\* = Not asked

Although there was a marked increase in Ministry–schools interaction, principals' views of the quality of their interaction varied. They were most likely to say it happened well in relation to advice if they encountered a problem. Table 3 (below) shows that positive views outweighed or matched negative views in relation to this advice, along with support with a problem, support with property work, or professional discussions on annual reports and targets. They were more negative than positive in relation to allocation of professional development, working with schools collectively, and principal appointment.

**Table 4 Principals' views about possible roles of their local/regional Ministry of Education office (*n* = 180)**

	Happens now, don't want it	Happens now, needs improvement	Happens now, done well
	%	%	%
Advice if we encounter a problem	0	26	42
Support if we encounter a problem	0	30	37
Support with property work	2	31	30
Professional discussions on school's annual report and targets, that feed into school discussion of strategies related to student achievement	6	29	29
Working with principals to establish local priorities for action	2	19	16
Support for schools to work together professionally	2	21	15
Advice on property work	2	33	31
Allocation of discretionary funds	1	26	12
Consultation on any local/regional changes that could affect our school	1	26	12
Support for board in appointing principal	3	7	11
Advice to board on appointing principal	3	6	11
Allocation of professional development paid for by MoE	1	34	9
Working with principals to establish a local pool of accredited principal appraisers	1	12	1

Note: Each question was answered by at least 80 percent of principals.

## Schools' access to external expertise and knowledge

We asked principals about the accessibility of external expertise and knowledge related to particular NZC learning areas, pedagogy, supporting priority learners, and other school practices that schools need to do well in order to meet the high expectations we have of them. Such access comes through school use of their operational funding, and the availability of affordable and good-quality expertise, whether through Ministry-funded professional learning, contractable organisations and individuals, links with other schools, or individuals in universities and research organisations. Some schools are confident they (now) have the relevant expertise and knowledge within their own staff.

Principals' views here point to very uneven access to expertise and knowledge, as well as national shortages. Taking *NZC* learning areas first, around half did not feel they could readily access expertise and knowledge for science, social sciences, technology or the arts. The priority given to English and mathematics is understandable given the introduction of the National Standards, but it has come at a price if New Zealand primary and intermediate schools are to be able to offer the full curriculum well.

**Table 5 Principals' views on the accessibility of external expertise or knowledge: learning areas (*n* = 180)**

<b>Expertise or knowledge in:</b>	<b>Can't readily access</b>	<b>Can readily access</b>	<b>Not needed</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Science	53	26	17
Social sciences	52	17	24
Technology	49	25	19
The Arts	47	22	23
How to embed key competencies into all learning areas	34	27	31
Health & physical education	26	47	19
Mathematics and statistics	24	61	12
English	20	57	18

Somewhat more heartening were principals' reports in relation to key aspects of pedagogy and student engagement (see Table 6).

**Table 6 Principals' views of the accessibility of external expertise and knowledge: pedagogy (*n* = 180)**

<b>Expertise or knowledge in:</b>	<b>Can't readily access</b>	<b>Can readily access</b>	<b>Not needed</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Effective pedagogy	31	49	11
Teaching as inquiry	31	49	12
Improving teacher management of student behaviour	18	49	24

However, substantial proportions of principals could not readily access external expertise or knowledge when it came to working more effectively with priority learners.

**Table 7 Principals' views of the accessibility of external expertise or knowledge: supporting priority learners (*n* = 180)**

Expertise and knowledge in:	Can't readily access %	Can readily access %	Not needed %
Better engagement with whānau about student learning at school and at home	50	29	14
Working with students with mental health issues	46	19	27
Better engagement of <i>Māori</i> students in learning	44	33	16
Information on reliable strategies to improve <i>Māori</i> student learning	43	35	14
Better engagement of <i>Pasifika</i> students in learning	34	11	45
Information on reliable ways to improve <i>Pasifika</i> student learning	32	18	42
Differentiated teaching for students with special education needs in learning	27	53	12
Improving inclusive practices for students with special education needs	26	48	17

As shown in Table 8, substantial minorities of principals lacked accessible guidance or knowledge on other key aspects that we now expect of our schools.

**Table 8 Principals' views of the accessibility of external expertise and knowledge: other areas of learning and school organisation (*n* = 180)**

Expertise and knowledge in:	Can't readily access %	Can readily access %	Not needed %
Guidance on selecting effective external advice/support for the school's professional learning	43	29	17
21st century approaches to learning	37	38	14
How to make effective choices on a tight budget	36	18	37
E-learning	33	54	7
Academic counselling for students	32	6	53
How to use student and school data in ways that improve teaching and learning	31	43	19
How to work as a learning organisation	27	28	36

Almost a third of principals wrote comments about accessing external expertise or knowledge. Over half their comments related to cost being an issue for schools.

Some advice is available to schools but, because we have to purchase it if it is outside the MoE priority areas, it is not necessarily available to all teachers. Professional Development is a much more expensive and narrow exercise now that the teacher support service (advisors) has been dismantled.

We pretty much rely on other schools or very expensive (which we can't afford) outside providers. The outcome is that we tend to do our own research and make the best of what we can find.

These providers now are a direct cost to the school, and should be FREE!!

While almost all the comments related to Ministry-allocated professional learning, one principal commented on the value of drawing on the expertise available through their professional networks:

Using own professional network NZPF [NZ Principals Federation], APPA [Auckland Primary Principals' Association] local principals' group, LCN [Learning and Change Network]—plenty of places to access ideas for what I need.

## Summary

Overall, the Ministry of Education appears to be undertaking more local work with schools than in 2010. Principals' views of this work show a wider variation than one would want for interactions that should be providing schools with information, advice and challenge. Senior advisers, assigned to provide a single point of contact and advice, did not have high continuity, and fewer than half the principals thought their senior adviser understood their school or primary/intermediate education. Not many had gained new and useful ideas from their senior advisers, or useful advice on the Government's flagship policies addressing the needs of priority learners.

Principals tended to be critical of the new allocation process for Ministry-funded professional development, which was more restrictive than previously. Responses on the quality of the Ministry of Education-funded professional development undertaken by schools show more favourable than unfavourable views, particularly in relation to its changing teaching practice and among those in decile 1–2 schools.

On the whole, primary and intermediate principals were open to more work with the Ministry, though doubts remained in relation to principal appointment and review, and property.

The need for schools to have more access to external expertise and knowledge was marked, particularly for *NZC* areas that are not English or mathematics and statistics, in relation to priority learners, the new frontier of e-learning, and how schools can make the best use of their resources, such as how to use data to improve teaching and learning work, and how to work as learning

organisations, where teachers share and build knowledge together to keep developing their capability to advance student performance.



## 4. Working with the New Zealand Curriculum

In this chapter we draw together the perspectives of teachers and principals to present a picture of how schools are currently working with the revised *New Zealand Curriculum* (*NZC*). How key is it to what schools are currently focusing on? To what extent are teachers able to provide the kinds of learning opportunities that *NZC* promotes? How are students encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning? Then we look at how well parents think their child's school is helping them develop *NZC*'s key competencies. These were designed to ensure New Zealand students are well equipped for our more complex social and work world.

Many schools began working with *NZC* when it was published in draft form in 2006. There has been widespread support for the revised *NZC*, not least because it was the result of a well-grounded development process over time, incorporating considerable consultation with stakeholders. The revised *NZC* became mandatory at the start of 2010. The NZCER 2010 National Survey showed that schools and teachers were often making changes to their practice rather than simply assimilating it into what they were already doing.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, it also showed that these changes were yet to transform classroom practice. Its implementation was very much a work in progress that needed ongoing support.

The NZCER 2010 National Survey<sup>11</sup> and the *Curriculum Implementation Exploratory Studies 2*,<sup>12</sup> which used case studies as the main methodology, also brought out some of the tensions being experienced in schools as they started work with the new National Standards, focusing on reading, writing and mathematics. Although the National Standards were designed to measure student progress within *NZC*, they appeared to many principals and teachers to cut against some of the grain of their work to develop it for their students, and to realise its aim of producing the “confident, connected, lifelong learners” of the *NZC* vision statement.

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<sup>10</sup> J. Burgon, R. Hipkins & E. Hodgen (2012). *The primary school curriculum: assimilation, adaptation, transformation*. Wellington: NZCER.

<sup>11</sup> C. Wylie & E. Hodgen (2010). *NZCER primary and intermediate schools national survey: a snapshot of overall patterns and findings related to the National Standards*. Wellington: NZCER.

<sup>12</sup> R. Hipkins, B. Cowie, S. Boyd, P. Keown & C. McGee (2011). *Curriculum Implementation Exploratory Studies 2. Final Report*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

## Schools' ongoing work with NZC

In 2013 *NZC* remained prominent in the work of schools. When we asked teachers and principals for their views of their school's current work with *NZC*, just over a third of each group<sup>13</sup> indicated that it was the driving force in their school. Somewhat more teachers than principals thought they were continuing to embed practices that would align with *NZC*. Around a third of each group thought that the focus on English and mathematics and statistics had taken their attention away from other aspects of *NZC*. Far more teachers than principals thought that National Standards were driving what they did in their school. Table 8 below gives the details.

Table 9 Teachers' and principals' views of their school's current work with The New Zealand Curriculum

View	Teachers (n = 713) %	Principals (n = 180) %
<i>NZC</i> drives what we do in this school	39	38
We're continuing to build approaches and practices that align with <i>NZC</i>	43	36
The focus on literacy and mathematics has taken our attention away from other aspects of <i>NZC</i>	31	34
National Standards drive what we do in this school	21	3

These views were not exclusive, particularly for teachers. Only 30 percent of those who said that *NZC* drove what they did in the school gave only that view. Twenty-seven percent thought their school was also continuing to build its approaches and practices to align with *NZC*, 21 percent that literacy and mathematics took attention from other aspects of *NZC*, and 22 percent that the National Standards drove what they did in the school, suggesting perhaps some strong tensions. Principals were more clear-cut: only 11 percent of the principals who reported that *NZC* drove what they did in the school, or who thought that they were continuing to build approaches and practices that aligned with *NZC*, also said that a focus on literacy and mathematics had taken their attention away from *NZC*.

Principals of decile 1–2 schools were most likely to describe their school's current work with *NZC* as continuing to build approaches and practices that align with it (48 percent, compared with 33 percent for decile 9–10). Decile 9–10 schools may have been in the best position to forge ahead with *NZC*, with 41 percent of these schools' principals saying it drove the school, compared with 24 percent of decile 1–2 school principals. Decile 9–10 school principals were also less likely than others to say that the focus on literacy and mathematics had taken their attention away from other *NZC* aspects.

<sup>13</sup> In the National Survey we do not try to match principal and teacher views by school, since we have different response rates for each school.

Teachers' views were less clear-cut in relation to school decile. There were indications (not statistically significant) that decile 1–4 school teachers were most likely to think that the focus on literacy and mathematics had taken attention away from other aspects of *NZC* (38 percent), and among decile 1–2 teachers that the National Standards were driving what they did in the school (29 percent).

Rural teachers were more likely than city or town teachers to say their school was continuing to build approaches and practices that aligned with *NZC* (54 percent) and less likely to say that the National Standards drove what they did in the school (13 percent).

## Professional learning related to *NZC*

What particular aspects of *NZC* did schools focus on in terms of their professional learning or change in teaching practice? Table 10 shows that the 'front-end' or pedagogical aspects of *NZC* continued to hold attention in primary schools, with teaching as inquiry/action research indicated as a focus by around two-thirds of teachers and principals, and at least half the teachers indicating a focus on e-learning and the key competencies. In her report on NZCER's 2009 Secondary Survey,<sup>14</sup> Hipkins described the key competencies as having:

the potential to bridge the front-end/back-end divide in *NZC*. They do this by reframing traditional content-focused teaching to enact the future-focused front-end messages in ways that make a demonstrable difference in classroom practice. (p. 31)

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<sup>14</sup> R. Hipkins (2010). *Reshaping the secondary school curriculum: Building the plane while flying it?* Wellington: NZCER.

**Table 10 Teachers' and principals' reports of school professional learning related to NZC over the last 2 years**

NZC aspect	Teachers (n = 713) %	Principals (n = 180) %
English	72	54
Teaching as inquiry / teacher action research	70	63
E-learning	59	39
Mathematics and statistics	54	59
Key competencies	50	34
Te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori	44	29
Formative assessment	43	34
Values	40	28
Integrating learning areas	35	31
Learning to learn	31	23
Future focused issues (e.g., citizenship, sustainability, enterprise)	25	8
Inclusion	19	17
Learning activities that enable students to research and contribute to school/community change	18	7
Another of the learning areas	15	5
Including parents and whānau in curriculum planning	12	8
Another aspect of NZC	5	3
Effective pedagogy (aspects other than teaching as inquiry)	*	46

\* = Not asked

Of the seven learning areas, it was English and mathematics and statistics that stood out—the two areas covered by the National Standards. Only 15 percent of teachers and 5 percent of principals reported a specific focus on other learning areas, such as science. This probably reflects the Government's priorities for funding professional learning and development related to these two learning areas.

- The strong focus on improving the learning of Māori students is also evident in the 44 percent of teachers and 29 percent of principals who reported a focus on te reo me ngā tikanga Māori, part of the Learning Languages learning area.
- Teachers generally covered a wider range of NZC aspects than principals in what they reported was a focus in their school's professional learning or change in teaching practice. On average, teachers reported focusing on six different aspects over the last two years, although some of these may have been combined (e.g., the use of inquiry in English). The survey data cannot tell us whether these aspects were approached completely separately, with a relatively short focus on each, or whether teachers were undertaking quite a number of different topics

in their professional learning and changes in practice simultaneously. It would be useful to have more fine-grained studies of school professional learning over several years so that we have better evidence about the kind of approaches that are most likely to embed new and effective practice.

- *NZC*-linked professional learning or focuses in the last 2 years were likely to be linked with schools' previous work. Consistent with decile 1–2 principals being more likely to report that their school was (still) building its *NZC* approaches, these were the principals most likely to report that their school had focused on key competencies (52 percent), effective pedagogy (62 percent) and formative assessment (52 percent). Teachers' responses indicated that e-learning was most likely to be included as a focus in decile 7–10 schools (68 percent), although it had also been a focus for around 50 percent of decile 1–6 schools.

Rural school principals were less likely to mention a school focus on either effective pedagogy or teaching as inquiry. Twenty-eight percent of teachers and 50 percent of principals included a comment about *NZC*.

Forty-two percent of teachers' and 54 percent of principals' comments referred to tensions between *NZC* and National Standards, making this a predominant theme.

We have developed our own curriculum based on *NZC* which drives everything we do. We have developed 'Learners Qualities' which are our interpretation of the key competencies. National Standards have distracted us from our work on *NZC* and Teaching as Inquiry. (Principal)

National Standards have created a situation where we have no choice but to really focus on literacy/numeracy to raise achievement. It is narrowing our approach and we have to be very creative to incorporate other aspects of the curriculum alongside literacy/numeracy. (Principal)

Due to the nature of National Standards and the pressure on teachers to have all children achieving at the national standard, a huge shift in curriculum time, energy and resource has gone into focussing primarily on reading, writing and maths. Although we aim to cater for and provide other areas of the curriculum the value of these subjects has been diminished by the pressure on teachers to reach the national standard targets. (Teacher)

The school staff value our amazing curriculum. Parents want to hear about National Standards. National Standards have taken over the journey. (Teacher)

Two other major themes were:

- positive comments of a general nature about *NZC* (22 percent of teachers, and 29 percent of principals made a comment), such as:

It is good, clear achievement objectives, well set out. (Teacher)

Gives a good overview of what students 'need' to learn as well as the 'wholistic'[sic]—values, key competencies, etc., to ensure global citizenship, life-long learners, etc. (Teacher)

- positive views of how *NZC* gave them the ability to tailor the curriculum to individual student and school needs (24 percent of teachers and 29 percent of principals made a comment), such as:

It's brilliant. Gives autonomy to BOT [board of trustees] and school community to create relevant learning for its students. (Principal)

We have designed the school curriculum to meet the needs of our students therefore are focussed on the foundational/basic skills at each level with the aim that the students receive and achieve a good grounding across the curriculum. (Principal)

*NZC* allows student learning needs and interest to drive what we do at our school—personalised, relevant to our children and community. (Teacher)

It's good that we have more freedom to fit to our school needs. (Teacher)

Only 2 percent of the comments principals made about *NZC* were critical, with teachers more likely than principals to include a critical comment (18 percent of those making a comment). Teachers' views included a mixture of beliefs that *NZC* was too broad, and that the importance of e-learning was not prominent enough.

It still has too many AOs [Achievement Objectives] and tries to cover too much at the Primary level. (Principal)

Curriculum is too broad. Far too much to try and fit into the classroom programme. (Teacher)

Is not specific enough. (Teacher)

The Key Competencies have no relevance in class and are a waste of time being in the curriculum. (Teacher)

Its needs updating to reflect the reality of the importance of e-learning + ICT + the issues that come with these. (Teacher)

## Learning experiences for students

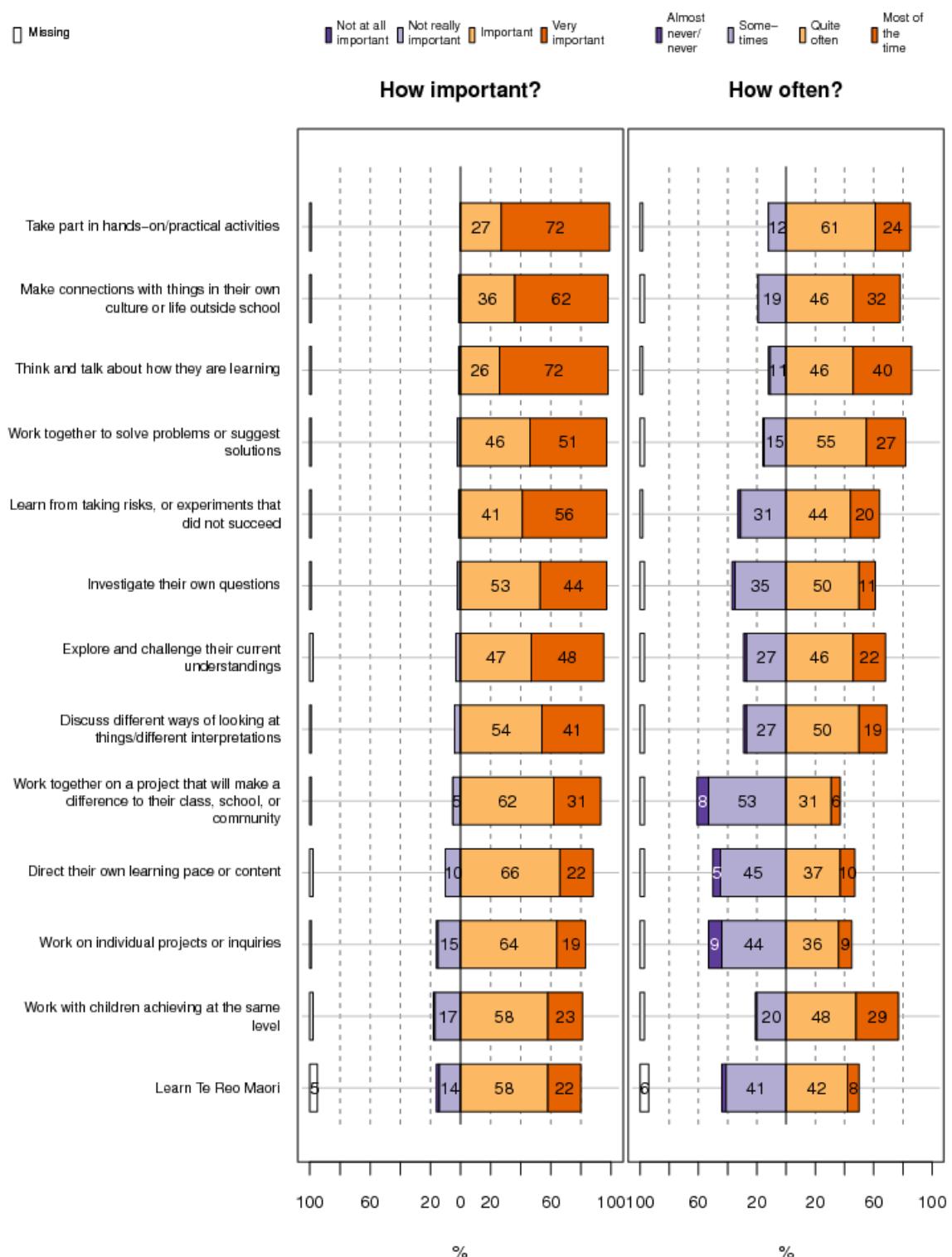
In order to develop the key competencies that underpin *NZC*, each student needs to experience a diversity of learning opportunities in a range of settings. We therefore asked teachers how important they felt 13 different types of learning experiences were to their students and how often their students did these things.

Teachers' answers show us that they valued these learning opportunities (see Figure 3). Over 80 percent saw them as being important or very important. Almost three-quarters thought it was very important for students to participate in hands-on experiences and to think and talk about how they are learning. Over half believed it is very important for students to: make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school; work together to solve problems or suggest solutions; and learn from taking risks, or from experiments that did not succeed.

What is striking about teachers' responses is the difference between the importance they placed on different types of learning experiences for their students and how often students did these things in their class. For example, 93 percent of teachers felt it was important or very important for students to work together on a project/activity that will make a difference to their class/school/local environment or community. However, only 37 percent of teachers reported that their students did this quite often or most of the time. While it would be difficult for a teacher's students to be doing all of these things 'most of the time', teachers' responses do suggest that many would like their students to be able do a greater variety of things in their class.

Some learning experiences were more likely to be rated as very important and as happening most of the time by teachers of older students. For example, it was more likely for Year 7–8 than Year 0–1 teachers to think it was very important for their students to investigate their own questions, work on individual projects or inquiries, and explore and challenge their current understanding. Teachers of younger students were more likely than those of older students to believe it was very important for students to take part in hands-on/practical activities and for their students to do this most of the time. These differences are likely to reflect changing emphases as students get older, with more independent, complex learning at the senior primary level.

**Figure 3 Teachers' views of the importance and frequency of learning experiences in their classrooms (*n* = 713)**



Teachers at decile 1–2 schools were more likely to think it was very important for their students to make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school (74 percent, compared with 54 percent of teachers in decile 9–10 schools), although just over half of this number of teachers at decile 1–2 schools reported that their students had opportunities to do so most of the time.

The overall picture of the importance teachers place on the different types of learning experiences for their students is very similar to the 2010 National Survey picture. Although not statistically significant, there was some minor slippage in relation to how often students make connections with things in their own culture or life outside school; in 2010, 84 percent of teachers indicated that their students did this quite often or most of the time, and in 2013 the figure was 78 percent. A similar decrease was also evident for learning from taking risks or experiments that did not succeed: 70 percent in 2010 and 64 percent in 2013.

For the first time in 2013 we asked teachers about learning experiences that involved students working with peers achieving at the same level. There had been anecdotal evidence of an increase in the use of ability grouping, advocated in some recent professional development initiatives. In contrast to the pattern for the learning experiences associated with key competencies that we asked about, where teachers' valuation tended to outstrip their ability to offer it in their class, more teachers reported they did this most of the time (29 percent) than thought it was very important (23 percent).

Teachers' responses to this item were associated with the age of their students. With an emphasis in the early years of school on such skills as learning to read and to count, it did not seem surprising that 50 percent of Year 0–1 teachers indicated their students worked with children achieving at the same level most of the time, and 33 percent of teachers at this level believed this to be very important. For teachers of Year 7–8 students, 20 percent reported their students doing this most of the time and 19 percent thought it was very important.

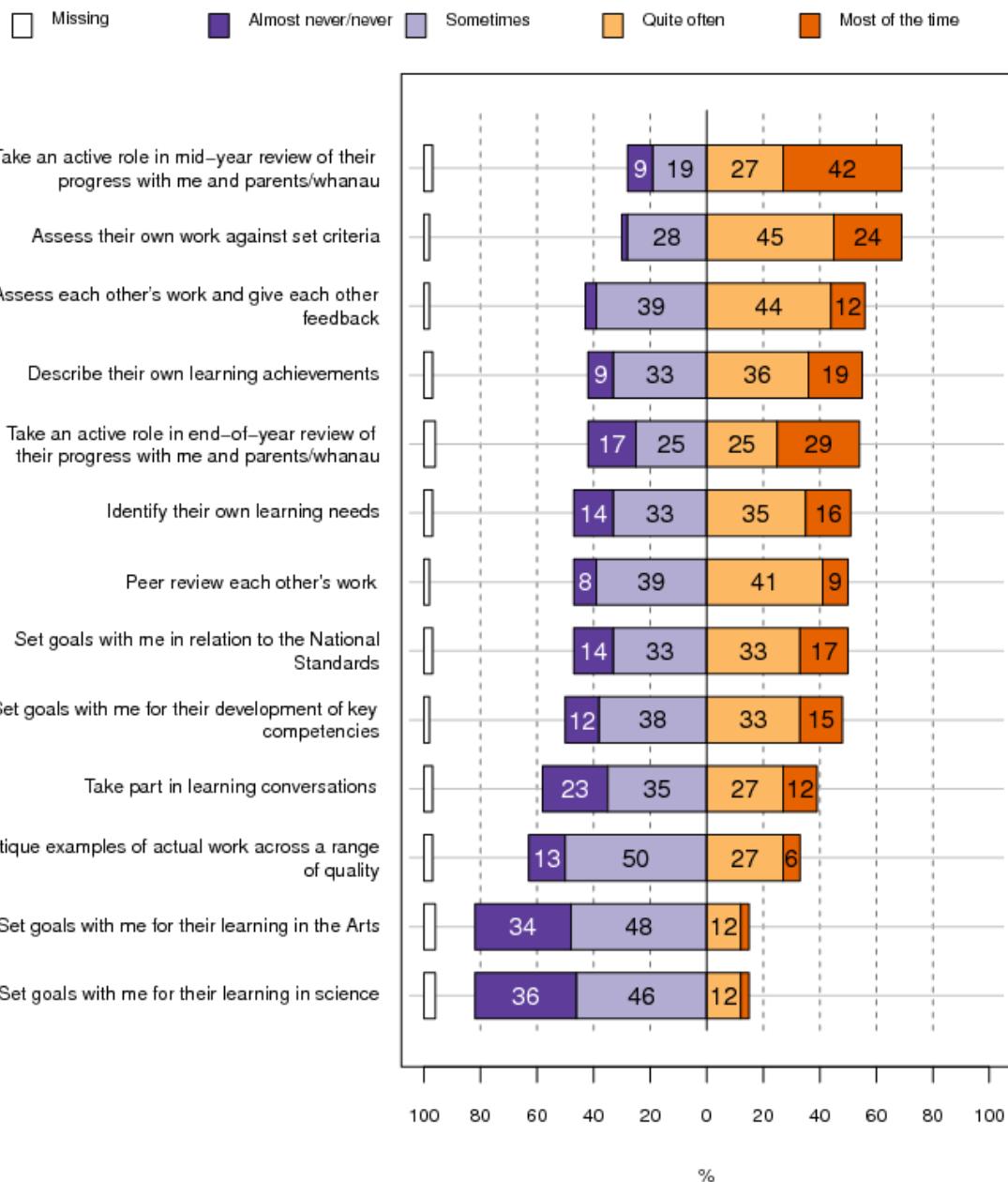
## **Students taking responsibility for their learning**

An important aspect of the *NZC* key competencies is students learning how to take responsibility for their own learning, including taking an active role in assessment for learning. We asked teachers how often their students were involved in 13 different activities that contribute to students taking responsibility for their learning (see Figure 4). The two learning-to-learn activities in which teachers were most likely to involve their students most of the time were three-way conversations between student, teacher and parents/whānau about the student's learning. These were more likely in a mid-year review of progress (42 percent) than at the end-of-year review (29 percent).

In terms of everyday experiences, students were most likely to assess their work and that of their peers against set criteria and give feedback, or describe their learning achievements. Setting goals

with their teacher happened less often, and when it did it was more in relation to the National Standards and key competencies than in the arts and science learning areas.

**Figure 4 Teachers' views on how often their students were involved in taking responsibility for their learning ( $n = 713$ )**



Generally, older students were more likely to have experiences in which they took responsibility for their learning. For example, 57 percent of teachers of Year 7–8 students reported that their students took an active role in a mid-year review of their progress with the teacher and the student's parent/whānau most of the time, decreasing to 33 percent of teachers of Year 0–1

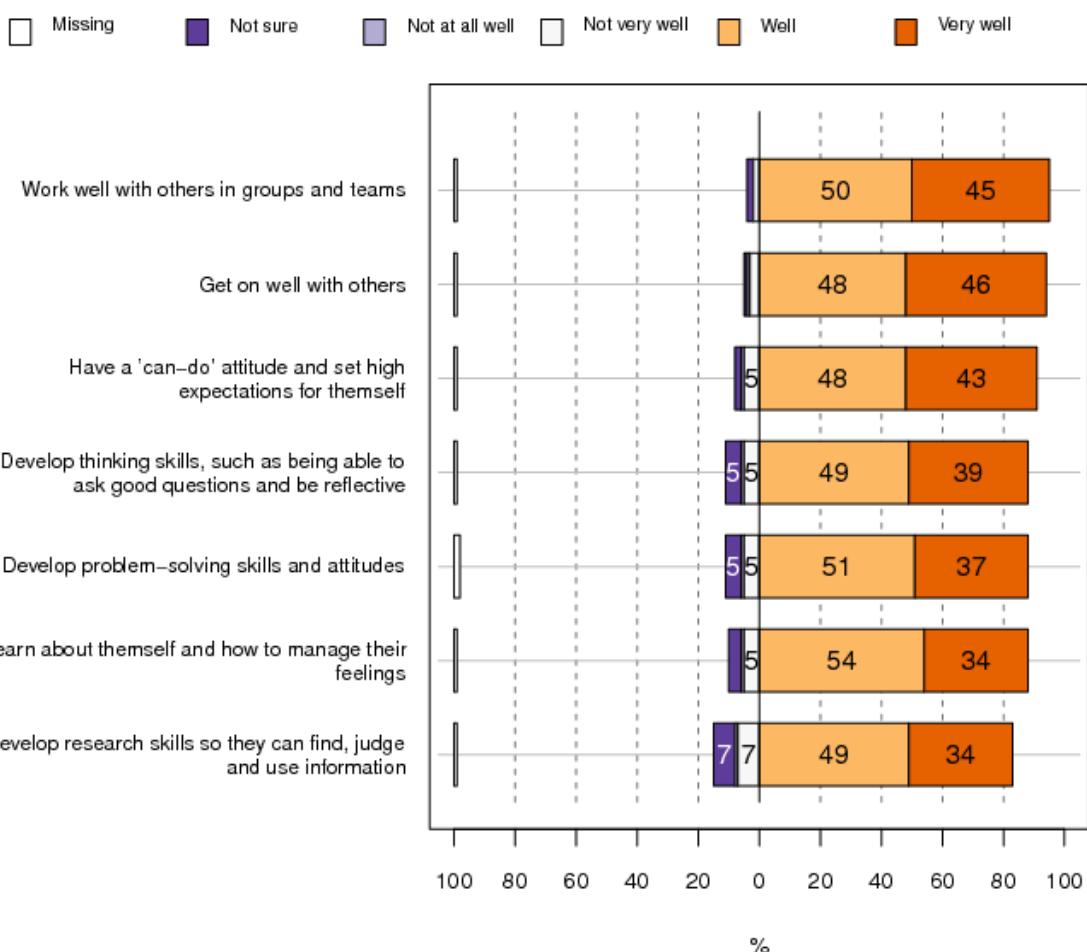
students. The difference for students' active involvement in end-of-year reviews was slightly smaller.

When it came to identifying their own learning needs (e.g., using learning logs), this happened most of the time with 27 percent of the teachers of Year 7–8 students, decreasing to 10 percent of Year 0–1 students' teachers. Year 7–8 students were more likely to have experiences in which they described their own learning achievements (e.g., through portfolios, reflection books) than Year 0–1 students (34 percent of the Year 7–8 teachers said their students did this most of the time, decreasing to 12 percent of the Year 0–1 teachers). Twenty-eight percent of Year 0–1 teachers indicated their students almost never or never had experiences in which they critiqued examples of actual work across a range of quality, whereas this applied to just 2 percent of Year 7–8 teachers.

## **Parents' perspectives on their child's development of key competencies**

A final perspective on students' learning in relation to the key competencies comes from the parent survey. Figure 5 shows parents' views on how well they thought their youngest child's school was helping them to develop aspects of the key competencies. In each case over 80 percent of parents indicated they thought the school was helping their child well or very well, indicating that most schools are including these aspects in children's learning. The two aspects most highly rated by parents involved relating to others, and were arguably those aspects about which there would be the most visible evidence for parents.

**Figure 5 Parents' views about how well they think their youngest child's school is helping them to develop key competencies (*n* = 684)**



## Summary

The *New Zealand Curriculum* was thought of as a driving force in their school for close to 40 percent of the principals and teachers responding. Around the same proportion saw their school as still continuing to work to embed it in their school practices. Some of these principals and teachers also thought that the national focus on literacy and mathematics had come at the cost of other aspects of *NZC*. Tensions found between providing the whole *NZC* and the need to focus on the curriculum areas and assessments related to the National Standards dominated teacher and principal comments on *NZC*.

Certainly English, and to a lesser extent mathematics and statistics, dominated the professional learning focused on particular curriculum areas. These are main curriculum areas offered by Ministry of Education-funded professional development. They are also the curriculum areas where principals are least likely to report difficulty accessing external expertise (see Table 5).

Only 15 percent of teachers mentioned another curriculum area, such as science. However, 44 percent had professional learning related to te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori, and the 'front-

end' or pedagogical aspects of *NZC* were continuing to be included in many schools' professional learning, as were key competencies for around half the teachers. It may be the case that teachers and principals are endeavouring to work with *NZC*'s emphasis on inquiry and key competencies within English and mathematics and statistics rather than treat them separately, and this would be in accord with the thrust of *NZC*.

Most teachers valued the kinds of learning experiences that can weave key competency development through curriculum ('subject') areas. However, their valuation of these kinds of learning experiences was not matched by how often they could provide them for children in their class. The overall picture has not improved since 2010. This suggests that more deliberate work needs to be done to help schools and teachers make *NZC* a powerful reality.



## 5. National Standards

The introduction of mandatory National Standards into primary and intermediate schools in 2010 was highly contested. The policy rationale was to improve student achievement by setting out expectations—standards—of the knowledge and skills students should have at each year level in reading, writing and numeracy, with teachers using a range of assessments and observations to make an overall teacher judgement (OTJ) about where each student was placed in relation to the standards. The use of the standards in reporting to parents was intended to provide them with clear and nationally consistent information about their child’s progress, in part to encourage more parental support of their child’s learning.

The inclusion of student performance levels on the National Standards in schools’ annual reports was intended to provide system-level information on patterns of student performance, as well as identify schools with high proportions of students performing below the standards. There was an intention of providing additional support for such schools and students. Our 2010 National Survey showed low levels of confidence among teachers and principals about their OTJs and the consistency of OTJs across schools. It also showed that schools came to their work on National Standards with different levels of understanding and strength in assessment and curriculum.

This section reports the main findings from the 2013 National Survey. A fuller reporting and discussion of the implications of the findings were given in a paper at the end of 2013, available on the NZCER website.<sup>15</sup>

### Views of the National Standards themselves

After 3 years of working with the National Standards, only a few principals think of the standards themselves as robust, or as providing a valuable record of student learning at their school. Teachers, who make the OTJs, are more sanguine than principals about their ability to understand the standards and make judgements against them (see Table 10 following); but, even so, the proportion who have confidence about this work is still less than half. Somewhat more teachers than principals think the standards are robust and that they provide a valuable record of learning at the school. Trustees are the most inclined to see National Standards as providing such a record, but again, not at high levels.

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<sup>15</sup> C. Wylie & M. Berg (2013). *National Standards: What difference are they making?* Retrieved from <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/national-standards-what-difference-are-they-making>

Table 11 School views of the National Standards

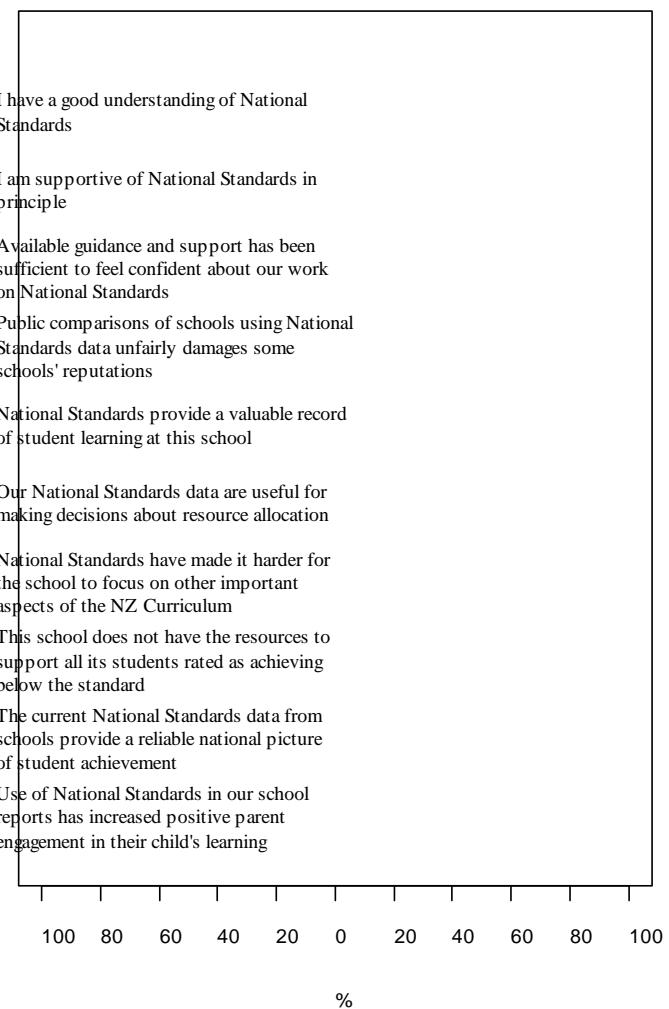
View (strongly agree & agree)	Principals (n = 180) %	Teachers (n = 713) %	Trustees (n = 277) %
Statements about expected achievement are clear	30	49	<i>Not asked</i>
Easy to make reliable judgements of student performance against	15	37	<i>Not asked</i>
The standards are robust	7	15	<i>Not asked</i>
NS provide a valuable record of student learning at this school	14	23	39

Only 17 percent of principals thought it was easy for their school's parents to understand the National Standards, and only 21 percent thought it was easy for their school's board to understand them.

## Trustee and parent perspectives

Trustees, and to a lesser extent parents, were largely confident that they understood the National Standards. Figure 6 shows 72 percent of trustees reporting a good understanding of the National Standards. Sixty-one percent were supportive of the National Standards in principle, yet this support came with some caveats. Trustees were sensitive to the effect of league tables—public comparisons of schools—with 68 percent thinking that this unfairly damages some schools' reputations. The proportion of trustees who saw National Standards data as useful in making decisions about resource allocation (39 percent) outweighed those who did not (24 percent), but 35 percent were unsure about the difference they made. Forty-one percent thought that their school did not have the resources to support all its students achieving below the standard. Just under half the trustees thought that National Standards made it harder for their school to focus on other important aspects of *NZC*. Eighteen percent thought that use of the National Standards in their school had increased positive parental engagement in their child's learning.

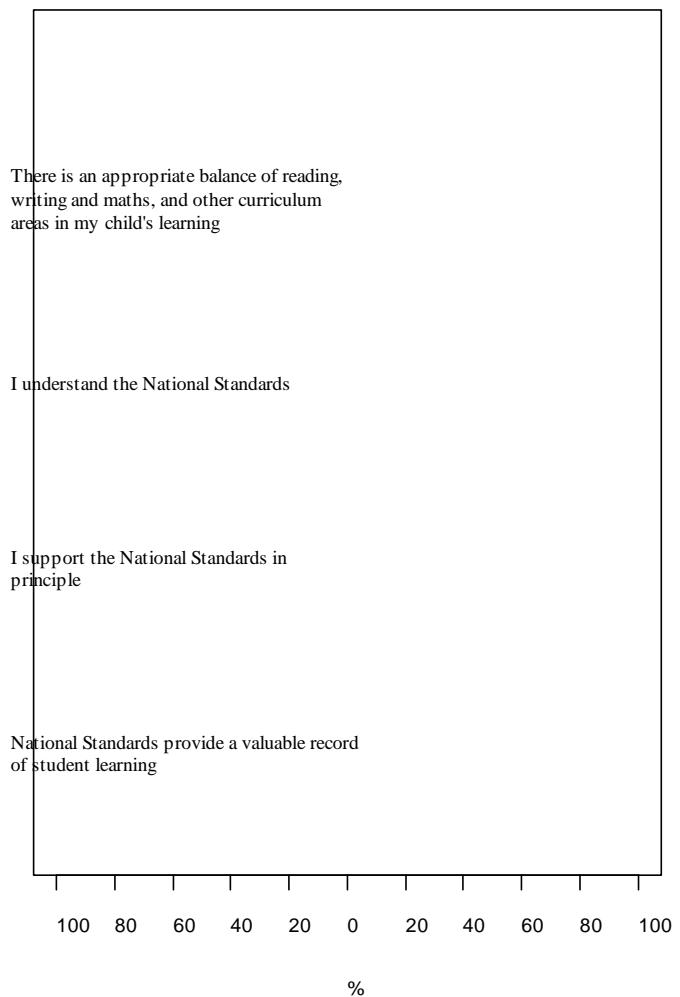
**Figure 6    Trustees' views of the National Standards**



Forty-three percent of the trustees responding also made a comment about the National Standards. A third of these comments queried the reliability or validity of National Standards data. Other concerns expressed by 14–21 percent of those commenting related to the negative effects of reporting school results, issues with their development or roll-out at the national level, not taking individual student difference sufficiently into account, and the negative effects from labelling students below the standard. Seventeen percent of the comments from trustees expressed a positive view of the National Standards with some caveats; an additional 4 percent made unqualified positive comments.

Just over half the parents responding thought they understood the National Standards; 45 percent supported them in principle, and 43 percent thought they provided a valuable record of student learning. Among the remainder, more parents were unsure than gave clear negative answers. Just over two-thirds thought their child experienced a balanced curriculum.

Figure 7 **Parents' views of National Standards**



Additional comments on the National Standards were made by 29 percent of the parents. Most of these raised some concerns, with comments related to the nature of reporting on National Standards, the effect of labelling students below standard, not taking individual differences into account, and, to a lesser extent, criticism of the setting of the standards, their reliability or validity. Six percent of those who made comments were positive, with another 8 percent expressing positive views with caveats.

## Teachers' perspectives on the National Standards

The introduction of National Standards has not led to a radical change in assessment practice in many schools. The policy has encouraged some shifts in what is used and how it is used, and more professional learning on assessment use and interpretation of results (see Table 12 below). It has added assessments for around half the teachers, but for most, not at the expense of formative

assessment. It has encouraged schools to ensure more consistency in which assessments are used and when they are used. Such consistency across teachers aligns with moderation of teacher judgements. Moderation was more common. This has the potential not only to support consistent judgements of evidence about student performance in relation to the National Standards, as part of the wider NZC, but also to support professional learning to enrich learning opportunities.

A minority of teachers worked in schools where the introduction of National Standards has meant more uniformity in approach. For example, 20 percent were in schools that had handed the administration of definitive assessments to senior school staff rather than develop teacher capability.

**Table 12 Teachers' reports of changes to their school's assessment practices because of National Standards (*n* = 713)**

Changes to assessment practices because of National Standards	% strongly agreeing	% agreeing
Increased professional learning around assessment use & interpretation of results	16	55
Increased moderation between teachers of same year level	17	53
School-wide timetable for assessments used to make OTJs	15	45
Increased moderation between teachers of different year levels	12	47
All teachers now use the same assessments to make OTJs	10	45
Changes to assessments	8	42
More use of summative assessments	5	33
More evidence about reading, writing and numeracy gathered from curriculum areas other than English and maths	15	32
More use of standardised assessments	7	39
No individual choice on the assessments a teacher uses with their class	6	20
Senior school leaders administer all the definitive assessments that are used to make OTJs	3	17
Less emphasis on formative assessment	2	12

Teachers' responses on the difference made to their teaching by their use of National Standards show that most gain has come from moderation work with other teachers, involving discussions on the interpretation of student work. Just under half also thought they were more attentive to each student's rate of progress. A quarter of teachers or fewer thought that National Standards were producing more useful data for teaching decisions and meeting the needs of the student groups that are the main focus of current educational policy.

**Table 13 Teachers' views of the difference made by National Standards to their teaching: data-related (*n* = 713)**

<b>View of difference</b>	<b>% strongly agreeing</b>	<b>% agreeing</b>
Moderation work around OTJs gives me useful insights for my practice	8	62
More attentive now to each student's rate of progress	6	39
Students frame their learning goals in terms of NS now	3	30
Better data to make decisions around teaching & learning at classroom level	3	23
Better data to identify the learning needs of priority learning groups	2	17
Better data to identify the needs of ESL students	1	12

However, the additional assessment work noted and increased professional learning relating to its use reported in Table 12, and the inclusion of National Standards in student goals (as shown above), has yet to be evident in marked differences in student achievement, as shown by the first item in Table 14.

**Table 14 Teachers' views of the difference made by National Standards to their teaching: work with students (*n* = 713)**

<b>View of difference</b>	<b>% strongly agreeing</b>	<b>% agreeing</b>
No big difference to student achievement because I previously identified individual student need & worked hard to increase rates of learning progress	39	39
Particular focus on students achieving 'below' or 'well below'	8	39
No big difference in student achievement because I need additional support to really change rates of learning progress	13	31
Anxiety about their NS performance has negatively affected some students' learning	13	28
It is harder to pay attention to students achieving 'above' the standard	8	22
Parents of students achieving 'below' or 'well below' are more engaged in their children's learning in positive ways	2	16

Sixty percent of the teachers felt that their National Standards work had created more work for little gain. Table 14 also shows that quite a few thought this work had eroded other aspects of their NZC work, and how they teach.

**Table 15 Teachers' views of the difference made by National Standards to their teaching: curriculum (*n* = 713)**

View of difference	% strongly agreeing	% agreeing
I feel I can't do justice to all the NZC learning areas	31	35
National Standards have created more work for little gain	25	35
National Standards have narrowed the curriculum I teach	21	29
My teaching feels less creative	17	25
National Standards have made it harder to integrate different curriculum areas	17	25
School-wide timetable for literacy & maths now makes it difficult for me to integrate curriculum areas	9	16

## Principal perspectives

We asked principals about the difference the use of the National Standards had made at their school. Moderation was reported as a useful addition at the school level. Indeed, this is the most positive change principals reported from their schools' work with National Standards. Forty percent thought that their school had become more attentive to students' rates of progress, and 31 percent that they had better data at the school level to make decisions. Anxiety about making OTJs was seen to affect some teachers' performance in 41 percent of the schools.

**Table 16 Principals' views of the difference made by National Standards use at their school: data use (*n* = 180)**

View of difference	% strongly agreeing	% agreeing
Moderation work around OTJs is useful professional learning	13	70
Anxiety about making OTJs has negatively affected some teachers' practice	9	31
More attentive now to each student's rate of progress	4	36
Better data to make decisions around teaching & learning at school level	2	28
Better data to make decisions around teaching & learning at classroom level	1	27
Better data to identify the learning needs of priority learning groups	2	19

Around two-thirds of the principals thought that the National Standards have come at some cost to the curriculum as a whole without providing gains commensurate with the attention they have taken (see Table 17). Many thought they need additional support to make the links between identifying need and responding effectively to it. Few have seen the gains in parent engagement

the policy assumed would follow the use of the National Standards in reporting to parents and whānau.

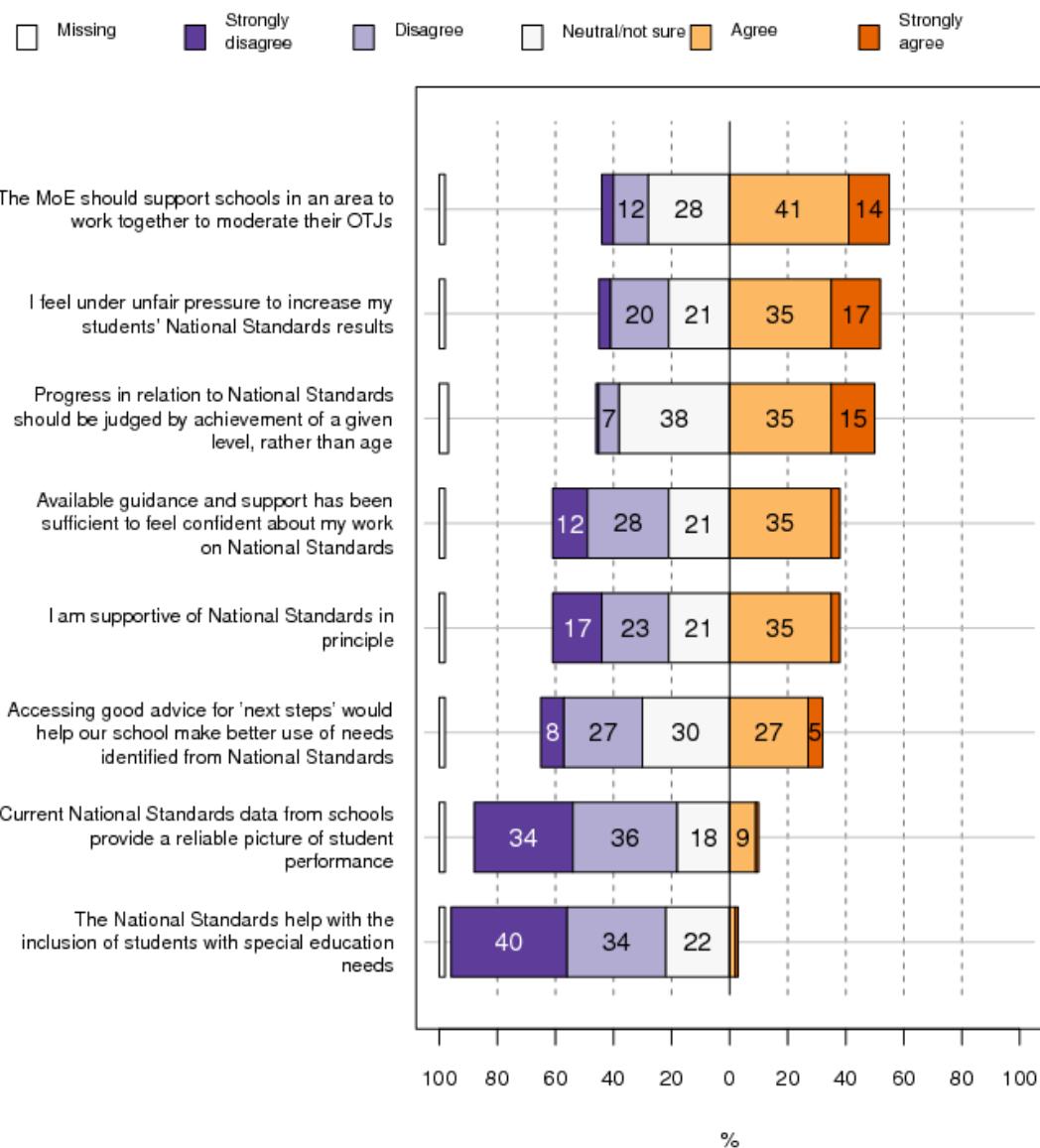
**Table 17 Principals' views of the difference made by National Standards to work with students & teachers' work (*n* = 180)**

View of difference	% strongly agreeing	% agreeing
No big difference to student achievement because school previously identified individual student need & worked hard to increase rates of learning progress	41	41
National Standards have created more work for little real gain	37	33
National Standards have narrowed the school's curriculum	30	37
Particular focus on students achieving 'below' or 'well below'	11	52
No big difference to student achievement because to really change rates of learning progress, we need additional support	21	41
Anxiety about their National Standards performance has negatively affected some students' learning	11	31
Less attention paid to students achieving 'above' the standard	5	31
Parents of students achieving 'below' or 'well below' are more engaged in their children's learning in positive ways	1	13
Students frame their learning goals around National Standards	0	14

Finally, we asked both teachers and principals about aspects of the National Standards implementation and where improvements could be made. Figure 8 shows that teachers remained interested in support for schools to work together to moderate their OTJs. Such work would likely provide assurance for them that the National Standards data from schools provide a reliable picture of student performance, something that only 10 percent of teachers currently believed.

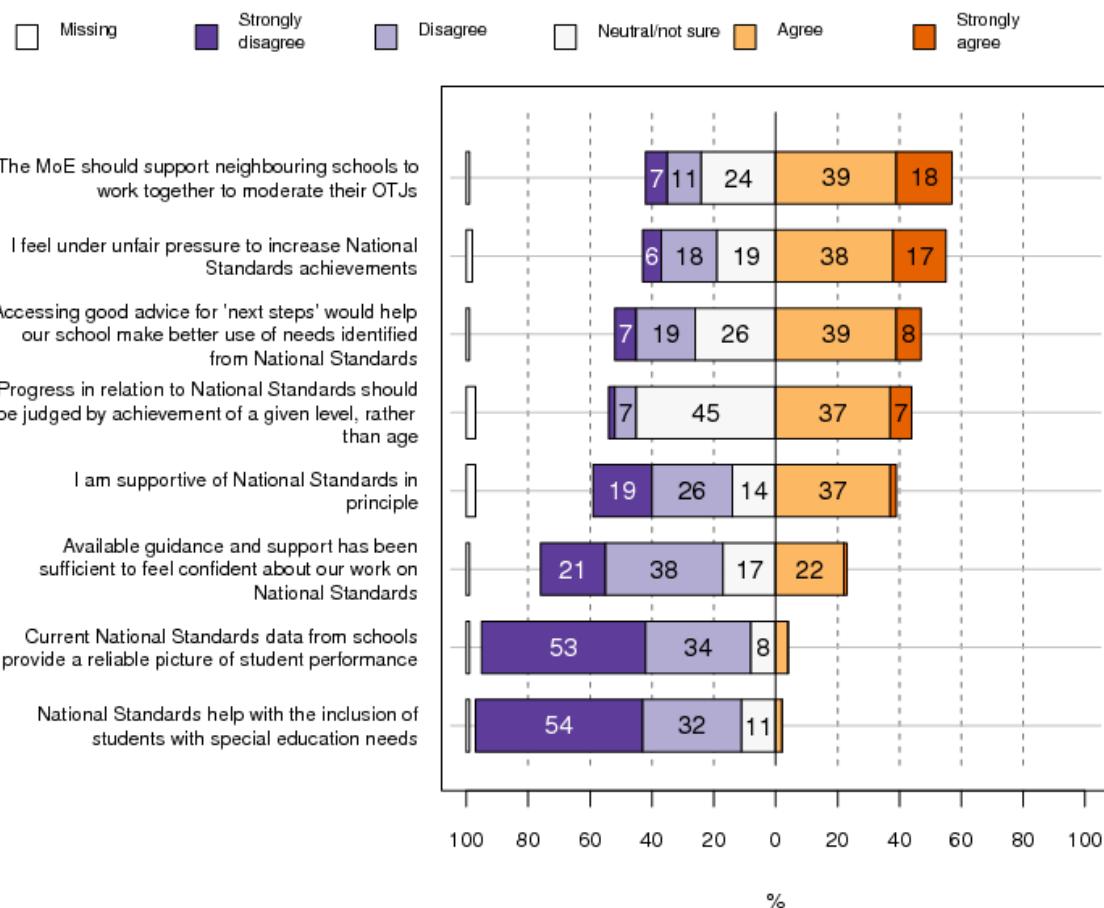
Teachers also supported looking at student progress in relation to the achievement of curriculum levels rather than age. There was a range of views evident about the quality of guidance and support, and whether their school needed good advice about 'next steps', pointing to uneven availability of this in schools. There was also a mix of teachers' views about support for National Standards in principle: 36 percent did, 40 percent did not, and 21 percent were unsure. Fifty-two percent reported unfair pressure to increase students' National Standards results; 21 percent were unsure or neutral about such pressure, and 24 percent did not experience this.

Figure 8 Teachers' views of National Standards ( $n = 713$ )



The picture from principals is similar, but less than a quarter were positive about the guidance and support for National Standards their school had received.

Figure 9 Principals' views of National Standards ( $n = 180$ )



## Summary

What the 2013 National Survey data suggest is that teaching and school practice have changed in many schools as a result of the introduction of National Standards. Moderation is the most valued of these changes, probably because it sets the National Standards in a context of professional learning and sharing of knowledge and understanding. There is an appetite for moderation work to occur between schools, which would also provide teachers with reassurance about the validity of their own OTJs and understanding of the National Standards.

The survey findings also raise the question of why, with many schools making changes and 'enacting' the National Standards, and being more conscious of rates of student progress, we do not see more teachers and principals reporting gains from their use. More close-grained work is needed to understand this.

The Ministry of Education's National Standards Aggregate Results Advisory Group recently recommended more of a learning approach to the use of the National Standards, including an "overall process of ongoing review", as well as shared understanding of what the National Standards are about, and more joint work between the Ministry, the teaching profession and those

who support teaching. These survey findings support such an approach—a change in what has happened so far—if the policy intentions of the National Standards to support better teaching and learning are to be realised.



## **6. Student wellbeing and behaviour**

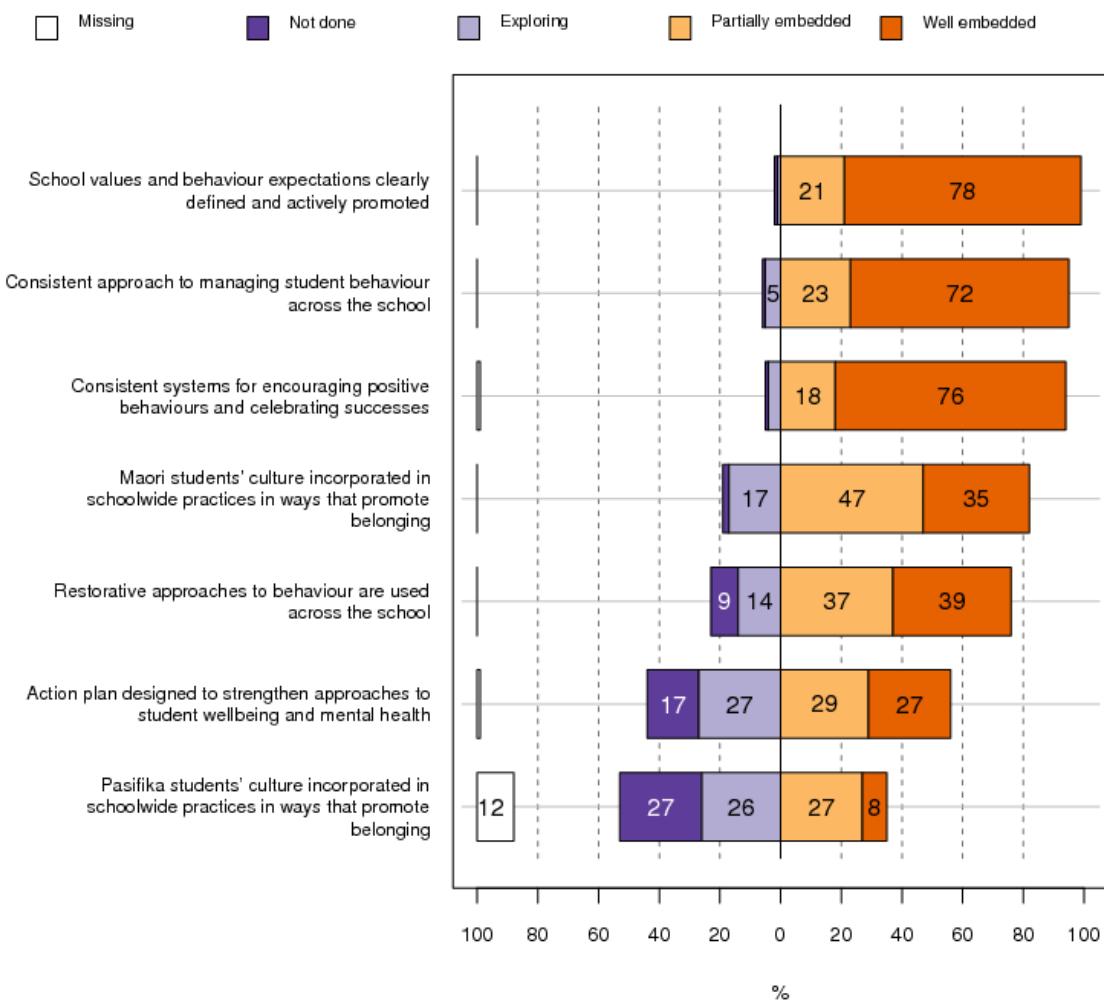
Student performance is related to their sense of belonging and safety in a school, and to their attendance and engagement in learning. The NZC key competencies brought participation and contribution and communication or social skills clearly into sight as something that could be taught and modelled, as much as reading or understanding of science. Recent years have seen a greater emphasis on schools fostering student wellbeing and behaviour, rather than seeing behaviour primarily in the context of discipline. This includes the PB4L set of initiatives, such as School-wide, focused on changing school frameworks and ensuring they are consistent across the teachers in a school, or Incredible Years Teachers, focused on professional learning for teachers so that they can change classroom frameworks and ways of relating and working within everyday teaching.

In this chapter we focus on principals' reports of schools' current approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour, and the support they have from the Ministry of Education, other government agencies and voluntary organisations. We also include teachers' reports of the support available to them, and their experiences of disruptive behaviour.

### **Schools' approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour**

Figure 10 shows that around three-quarters of primary and intermediate principals reported consistent approaches to managing student behaviour and systems to encourage positive behaviours and celebrate successes (e.g., 'caught learning' awards). Restorative approaches and an action plan for student wellbeing and mental health were not so frequently reported as well embedded. In addition, most schools had yet to incorporate Māori and Pasifika students' cultures in school-wide practices in ways that promoted their belonging.

Figure 10 School approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour: school level ( $n = 180$ )

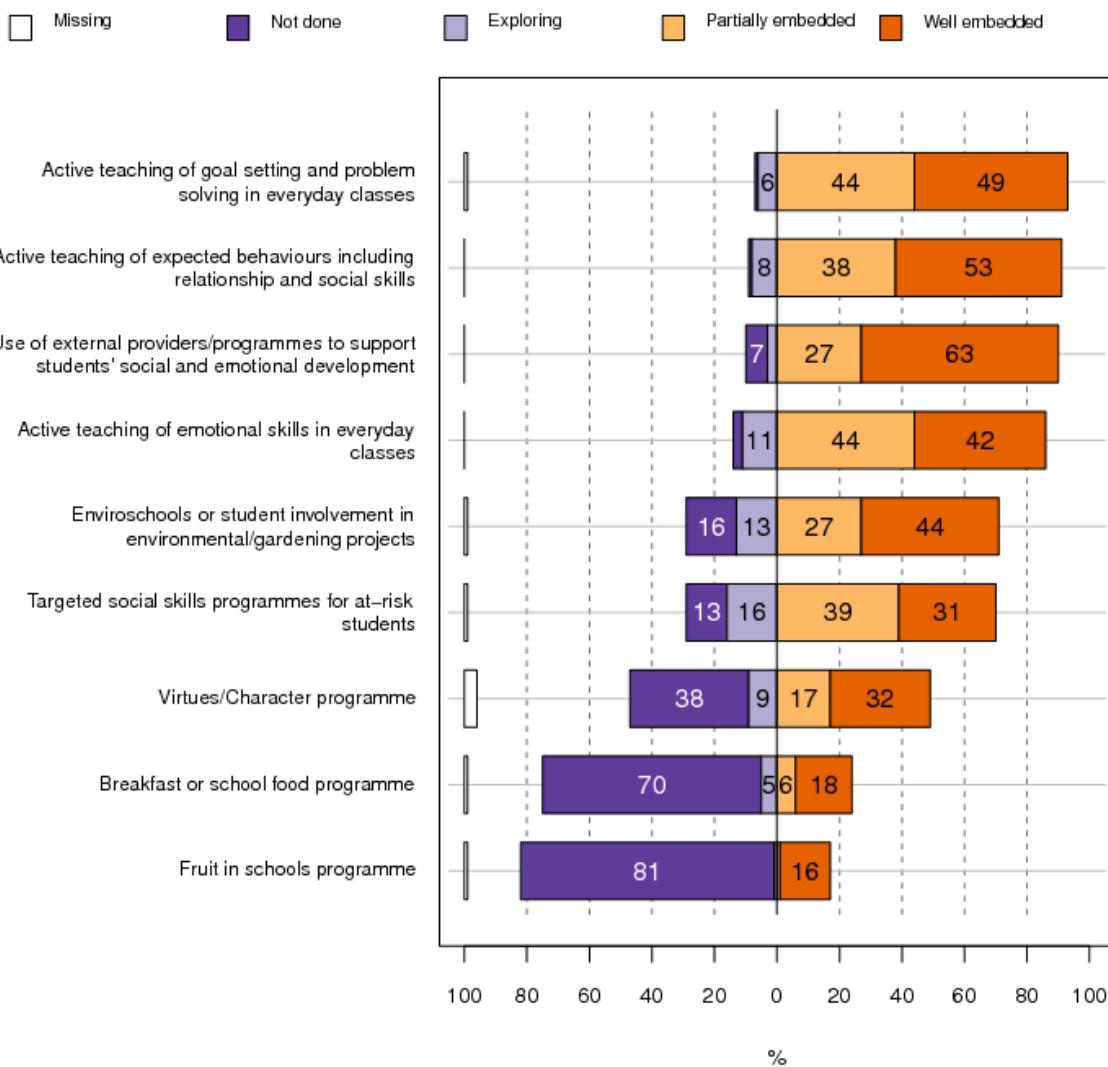


Very few principals of decile 1–2 schools had not started to embed Māori students' culture in their school: 95 percent of principals of decile 1–2 schools indicated their schools had partially or well-embedded approaches for incorporating Māori students' culture in practices across the school, compared with 72 percent of principals of decile 9–10 schools. The difference was even more pronounced for incorporating Pasifika students' culture, with 62 percent of decile 1–2 schools and 30 percent of decile 9–10 schools having approaches that were either partially or well embedded.

Around half the principals thought that active teaching of goal setting and problem solving, and expected behaviours, was taking place in everyday classes, threaded through different curriculum areas (see Figure 10). Active teaching of emotional skills was thought to be embedded in 42 percent of the schools. Environmental projects where students were given opportunities to take responsibility, work together as teams and gain curriculum-related knowledge were embedded in 44 percent of the country's primary and intermediate schools. Schools drew on external providers or programmes quite often. Eighteen percent were also supporting student attention in classes and

learning through providing food. Seventy-six percent of decile 1–2 schools had well-embedded breakfast or school food programmes, and the Fruit in Schools programme was well embedded in all decile 1–2 schools.

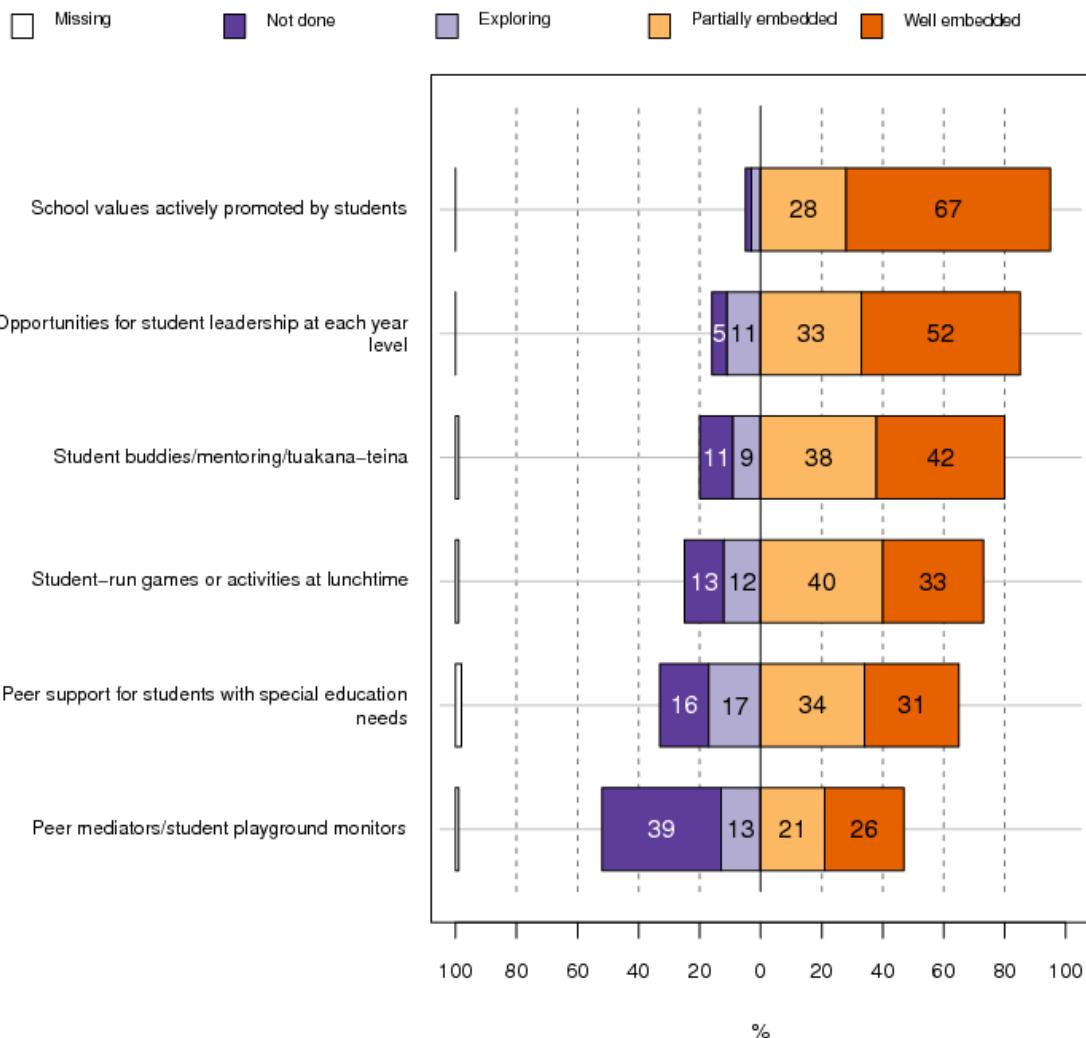
**Figure 11 School approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour: classroom teaching and support programmes ( $n = 180$ )**



Targeted social skills programmes for at-risk students were more likely to be well embedded in decile 1–2 schools (48 percent) than in decile 9–10 schools (24 percent).

Student involvement is a hallmark of the current approach to promoting student wellbeing and engaged behaviour at school. Figure 12 shows that two-thirds of principals saw school values that were being actively promoted by students (e.g., at assemblies) as well embedded at their school. In just over half the schools, opportunities for student leadership at each year level were also well embedded. Approaches that involved students supporting or mentoring one another tended to occur less frequently.

**Figure 12 School approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour: student involvement  
(n = 180)**



Overall, primary schools' approach to student behaviour management is shifting away from a focus on 'discipline' and the consequences of a child's actions, such as time out, removal of privileges, detention or suspension. Taking more of a problem-solving approach might involve an emphasis on restorative conversations or group conferences. Forty-nine percent of principals indicated that their school's overall approach to student behaviour management was an even mix of consequences and problem solving, and a further 41 percent indicated that their focus was mostly or all on problem solving. Only 9 percent of schools tended to focus more on consequences than problem solving.

Most schools had reviewed their approach to behaviour management during the last 3 years: 58 percent within the last year and a further 29 percent within the last 2 to 3 years. For 11 percent of schools, their approach to behaviour management was last reviewed 4 or more years ago.

Around 90 percent of principals indicated that school leaders and teaching staff had been highly involved in the development of their school's current approach to behaviour management. Support staff and students were less likely to be highly involved (32 percent and 29 percent, respectively), though they were consulted in most schools. Other groups that were more likely to be consulted than highly involved were specialist teachers and professionals, the school board, and parents and whānau. Ministry of Education advisers, such as PB4L school-wide practitioners (who are not available to every school) had some involvement in 19 percent of schools.

Decile 1–2 schools were most likely to highly involve people other than school leaders and teaching staff in the development of schools' approaches to behaviour management (48 percent involved support staff, 43 percent involved students, 29 percent involved parents, and 24 percent involved Ministry advisers).

Most schools were collecting data on student engagement and wellbeing in order to inform and review their approaches. The student engagement and wellbeing data most commonly reported by principals as being collected and tracked over time were student absence or truancy data (83 percent across all schools). Behaviour incident data, such as bullying, were collected in almost as many schools (79 percent). Other data relating to children's wellbeing that were collected and tracked related to their physical health (e.g., illness, school sores, dental records) (collected by 51 percent of schools), and screening data used to identify behaviour or mental health concerns (e.g., B4 School Check) (31 percent).

Forty-six percent of principals indicated that their students were asked for their views on school climate and culture, and 22 percent surveyed students about their engagement in school. Each of these responses is similar to those of 2010. Parent survey data were also collected and tracked over time in 72 percent of schools, probably feeding into mandatory requirements for community consultation regarding NZC and the school's charter.

Looking at differences according to school characteristics, the proportion of schools surveying student engagement was higher for decile 1–2 schools (38 percent decreasing, to 11 percent for decile 9–10 schools), as was the number of schools surveying parents (86 percent in decile 1–2 schools, compared with 74 percent in decile 9–10 schools). Decile 1–2 schools were also more likely to track student absence or truancy (91 percent compared with 74 percent of decile 9–10 schools), or screen children to identify behaviour or mental health concerns (38 percent, compared with 15 percent for decile 9–10 schools). Decile 9–10 schools, on the other hand, were more likely to collect students' views on school climate and culture (e.g., using the Wellbeing@School survey) (54 percent of decile 9–10 schools, compared with 38 percent of decile 1–2 schools).

Forty-one percent of all schools had targets in their 2013 annual plan related to students' engagement in learning and school, and 14 percent had targets focused on attendance and/or reducing absence/truancy. Decile 1–2 schools were more likely to have targets aimed at lifting students' engagement and wellbeing, including targets related to students' attendance, physical health and reducing behaviour incidents. Only small proportions of schools had targets

specifically relating to students' behaviour: 9 percent aimed to reduce the number of behaviour incidents, and a single school wanted to reduce the number of stand-downs.

## External support for student wellbeing and behaviour

Schools can draw on a range of Ministry of Education-funded or -provided support in relation to their approaches to student wellbeing and behaviour, and for support for individual students. Prominent among these are the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) initiatives, which began in 2010; the Ministry's special education services; and the Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs), employed in 40 clusters to serve schools in the cluster area.

Table 18 shows that almost all primary and intermediate schools—but not all—used an RTLB, and that most had used specialists from the Ministry of Education Special Education section. Teachers from just under half the schools had taken part in Incredible Years (Teachers), usually attended by two teachers from each school. Thirteen percent of the schools had experience of either the School-wide or Intensive Wraparound service, the latter targeted at children with the most challenging behaviour. Few principals reported that these services were not useful; the figure is highest for the newer Intensive Wraparound service. A significant minority of principals had mixed experiences of these services and programmes. Principals were most positive about the School-wide initiative.

**Table 18 Principals' views of Ministry of Education support and development for student wellbeing and behaviour ( $n = 180$ )**

Views of those using this support and development	Not useful %	Mixed use %	Useful %	Very useful %	Number of schools	% of total sample ( $n = 180$ )
PB4L – School-wide practitioner	4	8	38	50	24	13
RTLB	5	28	35	32	174	97
PB4L – Incredible Years (Teachers)	4	32	38	26	87	48
MoE Special Education (e.g., psychologist, speech-language therapist)	8	35	36	21	158	88
PB4L – Incredible Years (Parents)	2	41	39	18	46	26
PB4L – Intensive Wraparound service	22	30	35	13	23	13

Low-decile schools with high numbers of Māori and Pasifika students had been given priority for acceptance into PB4L: 71 percent of decile 1–2 schools had experience of the Incredible Years (Teachers) programme, and 33 percent of decile 1–2 schools had experience of the School-wide programme.

Additional services for schools targeted at individuals whose attendance, behaviour or wellbeing is of concern are also available. Over half the schools had been using the new integrated attendance services, which began in term 1 of 2013 (see Table 19), with new Ministry of Education-funded providers in many areas. Just under half had drawn on support from Child, Youth and Family (CYF). Twenty-nine percent of schools had professionals, such as a school nurse or social worker, based at the school. Principals who had such school-based provision were generally positive about the usefulness of these services. Principals were not so positive about the new attendance service provider or CYF support.

**Table 19 Principals' views of CYF and other support for student wellbeing and behaviour  
(n = 180)**

Views of those using this support	Not useful %	Mixed use %	Useful %	Very useful %	Number of schools	% of total sample (n = 180)
Professionals based at school (e.g., school nurse, social worker)	–	27	40	33	52	29
New attendance service provider	25	44	23	8	102	57
CYF – other support	31	46	18	5	89	49 <sup>a</sup>
CYF – social or youth worker	22	48	26	4	87	48

On-site professionals focused on student wellbeing and behaviour worked at 81 percent of decile 1–2 schools but only at 9 percent of decile 9–10 schools. The national attendance service was being used by 90 percent of decile 1–2 schools, decreasing to 35 percent of decile 9–10 schools.

We also asked principals about their experience of support from health and community services, as shown in Table 19. Around two-thirds were drawing on support from health promoters, such as the local District Health Board or the Regional Sports Trust. Around 40 percent were using support from the Ministry of Health-funded Health Promoting Schools advisers and/or health promoters from non-government organisations such as the Heart Foundation. Few schools were using health-promoting services that targeted Māori or Pasifika students' wellbeing; for example, only 6 percent had drawn on support from a Pasifika liaison person or community representative.

On the whole, these health and community services were less likely than the Ministry of Education behaviour-focused initiatives to be seen as 'very useful'.

**Table 20 Principals' views of health and community agencies' support for student wellbeing and behaviour ( $n = 180$ )**

Views of those using this support	Not useful %	Mixed use %	Useful %	Very useful %	Number of schools	% of total sample ( $n = 180$ )
Health promoters from government and other agencies (e.g., local DHB, Regional Sports Trusts)	5	31	47	17	115	64
Kaitakawaenga Māori or community rep	15	30	40	15	20	11
Health Promoting Schools advisers	11	40	38	11	72	40
Pasifika liaison or community rep	27	46	18	9	11	6
Local iwi-based health services	17	63	14	6	35	19
Health promoters from NGOs (e.g., Heart Foundation)	9	53	33	5	77	43

Most of the schools that were using Kaitakawaenga Māori (Māori liaison advisers employed by the Ministry of Education), a Māori community representative and/or a Pasifika liaison person or community representative were decile 1–4 schools. Decile 9–10 schools were least likely to be using the services included in Table 19.

## Teachers' experience of support for behaviour

We asked teachers about the support available to them and their students in relation to student wellbeing and behaviour. Many had access to class data that helped improve approaches to managing behaviour (64 percent). They were more confident they could refer students to health professionals if needed (80 percent) than about their ready access to an RTLB to help them work with students with behavioural issues (55 percent) or a co-ordinated support system if students had mental health needs (49 percent).

Of the 58 percent of teachers who had been given advice by their school's current RTLB, two-thirds were positive: 30 percent said this advice had improved their practice, 8 percent that they had been able to sustain changes made as a result of the advice, and 30 percent that it had changed their thinking.

Nineteen percent of the teachers responding to the 2013 National Survey had taken part in Incredible Years (Teachers). Only 11 percent did not find some gain from their participation. Thirty percent had been able to sustain gains made, 44 percent to improve their practice and 14 percent to change their thinking.

Student behaviour that causes serious disruption to teaching was an issue for almost half the teachers responding. Thirteen percent experienced such disruption frequently, and 41 percent

sometimes. This was much the same national picture as we saw in the 2010 survey results. Decile 9–10 school teachers were least likely to experience such disruption (55 percent had never experienced it, compared with 44 percent overall).

Eighty-two percent of the teachers said that they got timely support within their school if they had a student behaviour problem (48 percent described its quality as very good, and 33 percent as good).

The majority of primary and intermediate teachers had never felt unsafe in their school (85 percent) or class (88 percent). Fourteen percent had occasionally felt unsafe in their school, and 11 percent in their classroom. Less than 1 percent had frequently felt unsafe in their school or classroom.

## Summary

The 2013 National Survey shows that primary and intermediate schools were shifting practice in relation to behaviour to become more pro-active in embedding the development of the skills and responsibilities students need in everyday class and school practices. Of particular interest is that almost half had taken up environmental projects, which allow rich entwined opportunities for the development of behaviour and curriculum areas, and that a significant minority of schools gave students the responsibility to support one another through tuakana-teina relationships, student-run activities at lunchtime, and some restorative justice practices. A significant minority of schools have also embedded Māori culture in school-wide practices in ways that principals believe promote Māori students' belonging in school.

Decile 1–2 schools were particularly active in supporting their students' wellbeing and belonging at school, and involving them in changing behavioural approaches.

Schools were supported in their work on behaviour at both the general and individual student level through a range of roles and programmes. Few who accessed Ministry of Education services did not find them useful, although a significant minority found the advice and support they got of mixed use. Views were somewhat less favourable about the new attendance service and CYF support.

Teachers usually got timely support within their own school if they encountered a problem with behaviour. Student behaviour causing disruption continued to be an issue for almost half the teachers, though only frequently for 11 percent. Around half of teachers thought they could get ready access to an RTLB to help them work with students with behavioural issues, or to a co-ordinated support service if a student had mental health needs. There appears to be room for further development with regard to support for students who might disrupt classes.



## 7. ICT use

There are four main ways that New Zealand primary schools now use information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning. The first is in classroom work. NZC notes the considerable potential to use ICT to support students' learning in ways that supplement traditional ways of teaching and in new innovative ways. Specifically mentioned is the potential for using ICT to overcome barriers of time and distance to connect students with other communities of learners, environments and resources. In order to be able to make these connections and realise these possibilities, schools need to have sufficient and reliable hardware and access to the Internet.

The second way stems from the power of student management systems to track student engagement in school, and their achievement. Good analysis of this information can be used to better meet individual and class needs. Third, teachers, principals and, to some extent, trustees are also using the Internet to support their roles. Finally, some primary schools are using the Internet to communicate with parents and to share student performance.

This chapter describes what is currently happening in primary schools, and some of the challenges that are evident in making the most of the potential of ICT for learning.

### Current policy

To strengthen schools' use of ICT and e-learning, the Ministry of Education has implemented the School Network Upgrade Programme (SNUP), which involves upgrading schools' hardware and internal networks. In April 2013 over half (1,514) of the country's 2,500 schools had participated in SNUP. This is being followed by the provision of ultra-fast broadband (98% of schools are to have this by 2016), and then a managed network for schools—the Network for Learning (N4L).

The managed network connects schools together via a secure data network, offering high levels of service quality and support. The managed network will also enable schools to access the Internet over faster and more reliable connections than the ones most schools are using now. The network will be run over the best mix of ultra-fast, rural, and remote broadband available in New Zealand. (Ministry of Education)<sup>16</sup>

By the end of 2013 the first 21 schools were to be connected to the N4L, with a further 700 schools to follow in 2014.

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<sup>16</sup> Retrieved 3 February 2014 from  
<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EducationInitiatives/UFBInSchools/ANetworkForLearning.aspx>

ICT equipment and Internet access, and e-learning, were certainly to the fore in many schools when the NZCER National Survey was undertaken in July/August 2013. These were two of the top five challenges that principals, teachers and trustees identified as facing their school (see Table 22).

## E-learning

E-learning was a school focus for professional learning or change over the last 2 years for 59 percent of teachers and 39 percent of principals. Just over half the principals reported that their school could readily access external expertise or knowledge to keep developing e-learning in their school. A third, however, said they could not readily access this expertise. Only 7 percent of principals thought their school did not need external expertise to help them develop e-learning. Some schools (12 percent) had teachers funded over entitlement who were carrying out ICT support work (but we do not know whether this was related to technical support of systems or equipment, or e-learning).

Forty-four percent of trustees said their board had on it ICT experience or skill, and 27 percent said their board had on it experience with e-learning.

E-learning was also to the fore in the achievements teachers, principals and trustees identified. Seventy percent of teachers thought that one of their main achievements as a teacher in the last 3 years was using ICT in new ways for student learning, and 69 percent of principals thought that more use of e-learning was one of their main achievements as a principal over the same time period. Forty-two percent of trustees thought more use of e-learning was one of the board's main achievements over the last year. So schools are well on the way to making more of e-learning.

However, 60 percent of teachers reported that their students' use of ICT was limited because of insufficient or poor-quality equipment, or slow or unreliable access, and 38 percent. because the school system broke down too often or the school lacked a technician to deal with problems. Thirty-eight percent of teachers thought their students' use of ICT was limited by their own (teacher) knowledge and skills, and 19 percent by the lack of a strong leader of the use of ICT for learning in their school. Lack of a strong ICT learning leader was least likely to limit student learning for decile 9–10 school teachers (13 percent, increasing to 28 percent of decile 1–2 school teachers).

Thus to get the lift in e-learning sought by NZC, the broadband rollout and the Network for Learning, it seems likely that schools will need to invest more in equipment and technical support, as well as ensuring that teachers' own knowledge and skills grow.

## Use of ICT in classes

Teachers' reports of how often their students were using ICT (including the Internet, digital cameras, wikis and blogging), shown in Table 20 below, indicate that ICT was being used most often for tasks that could be completed by individual students, with an increase since 2010 in practising specific skills (e.g., in mathematics or reading, the focus of the National Standards), and collecting or analysing data. Searching for information on the Internet had remained much the same since 2010. Most of the other uses we asked about were still uncommon in primary schools.

**Table 21 ICT for learning that teachers reported their students using often: 2007, 2010, and 2013**

ICT use	2007 (n = 912) %	2010 (n = 970) %	2013 (n = 713) %
Practise specific skills (e.g., maths or reading)	22	38	58
Search for information during class on the Internet	29	41	42
Create printed documents or slideshow presentations	42	29	24
Do homework assignments	*	*	20
Generate multimedia work (e.g., images, movies, music, animations)	5	12	14
Collect and/or analyse data (e.g., from an Internet site or spreadsheet)	5	3	10
Collaborate with others inside the school on shared learning projects (e.g., online book clubs, creating a wiki)	*	9	8
Maintain a record of goals or learning achievements (e.g., e-portfolio)	*	*	10
Communicate with people outside the school (e.g., experts, other teachers or students, community groups)	7	*	7
Collaborate with others outside the school on shared learning projects (e.g., online book clubs, creating a wiki)	*	5	4

\* = Not asked

Some of the more collaborative e-learning envisaged by NZC seemed to have taken a backward step since 2010. In 2010, 14 percent of teachers said their students never used ICT to collaborate with others inside the school on shared projects (e.g., online book clubs, creating a wiki); in 2013, it was 32 percent. Use of ICT to collaborate with others outside the school on shared learning projects was never used by students of 27 percent of teachers in 2010. In 2013, 40 percent of teachers said their students never did this.

Teachers of older students were more likely to report their students using ICT than teachers of younger students, with the exception of using ICT to practise specific skills. For example, 11

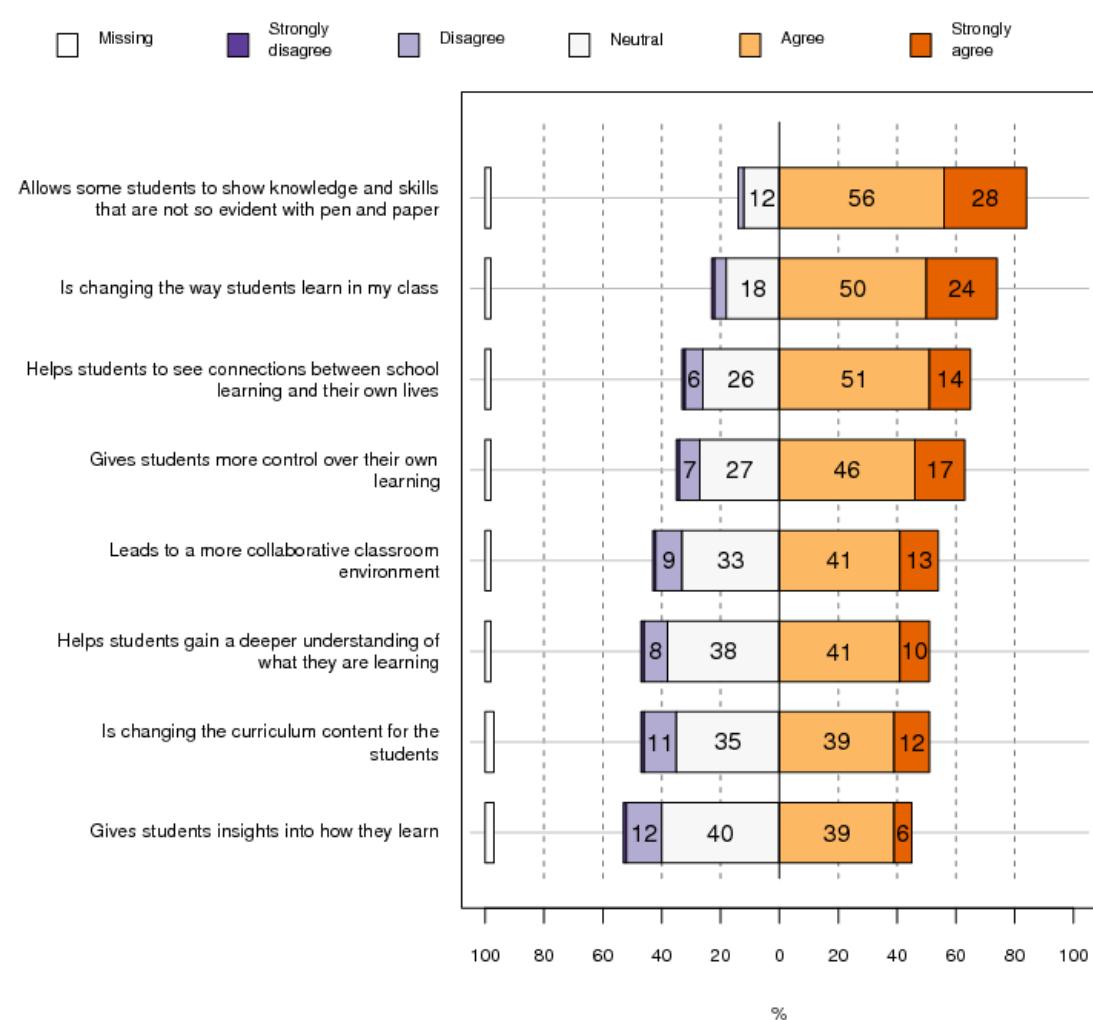
percent of teachers of Year 0–1 students reported that they often used ICT to create printed documents or slideshow presentations, increasing to 41 percent of teachers of Year 7–8 students.

School decile showed a difference in the use of ICT for homework, probably indicating differences in home access to computers. Thirteen percent of teachers at decile 1 schools said their students used ICT for homework often, compared with 27 percent of teachers at decile 9–10 schools.

## Teachers' views of the value of e-learning

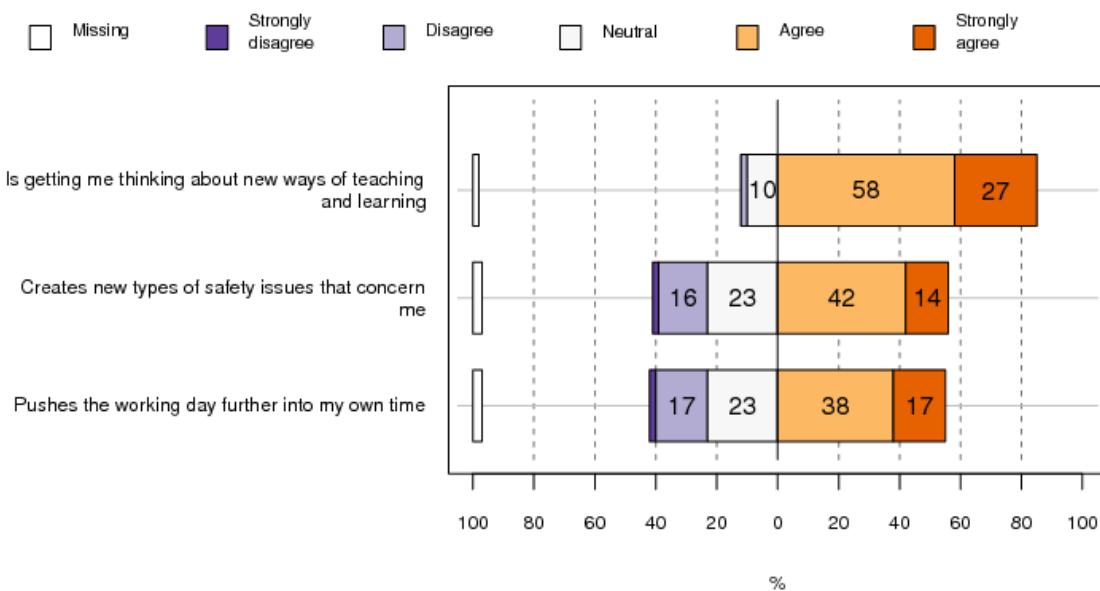
Many teachers reported that the use of ICT in their class was changing the way students learn. Figure 13 (below) suggests that the extent of this change varied among teachers and their classes, with between 6 and 28 percent strongly agreeing that they saw the kinds of change we asked about, between 39 and 56 percent agreeing, between 12 and 40 percent not sure or neutral, and between 4 and 13 percent seeing no change in student learning related to ICT use.

Figure 13 Teachers' views on their students' use of ICT: effects on students ( $n = 713$ )



Most teachers also found the use of ICT with their students was changing their own thinking about teaching and learning. But Figure 14 also shows some costs from ICT use: just over half the teachers were concerned about new safety issues and were finding their working day extended.

**Figure 14 Effects for teachers of the use of ICT in their classes (*n* = 713)**



## Student management systems

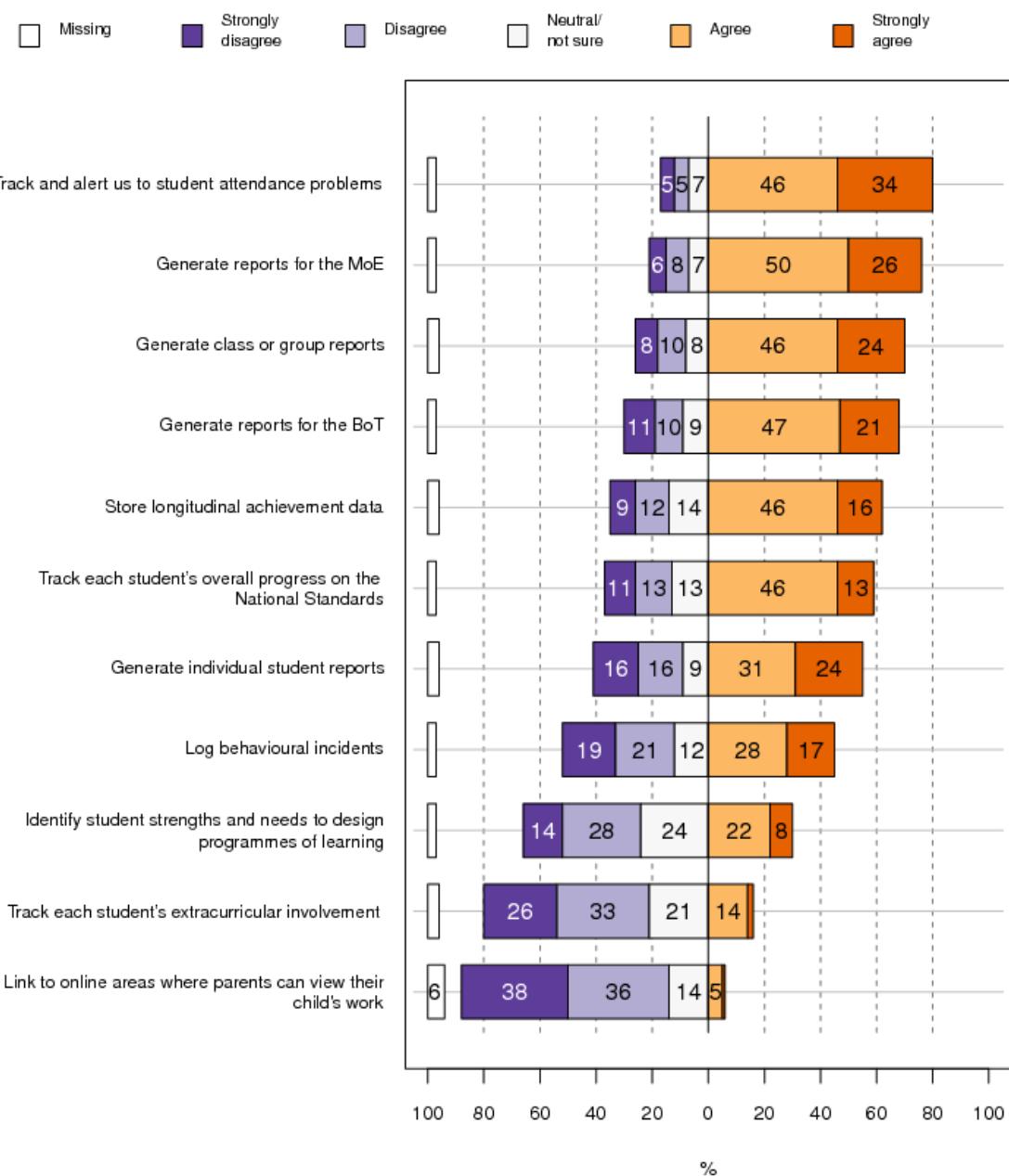
Electronic systems to record student-related data are now practically universal in primary schools, although not mandatory. Schools made their own decisions about when and what kind of student management system (SMS) to use, producing a situation with great diversity and little interoperability; for example, to share information on students leaving one school to their next school. To ensure schools had systems that would match their needs, the Ministry offered funding until 2009 to help schools move to accredited SMS vendors. The Ministry now provides schools with guidelines for choosing and implementing an SMS, along with information about the proportions of schools using different SMS products. SMS have become integral to school operations in an environment of much greater data collection and expectations that data analysis will contribute to decisions on school use of resources and programme planning, in line with student needs.

Almost all principals (94 percent) reported that their school had a staff member who was responsible for maintaining students' administrative data, such as their current address and emergency contact details. However, only 19 percent of schools employed someone to enter and manage student achievement data: this was left up to teachers in most schools. Just over half the schools (51 percent) had someone whose role it was to analyse student achievement data for

others in the school to use. It may be that our question here was too limited, and that schools have identified such a role but were sharing it across syndicate and/or curriculum leaders.

Figure 15 shows that principals believed their SMS systems were used most effectively in relation to student attendance problems, and then to generate reports relating to student achievement. Tracking individual students over time was less common, with 59 percent reporting effective use of SMS to track individual student progress on the National Standards.

**Figure 15 Principals' views about the effective use of their school's Student Management System (SMS) (*n* = 180)**



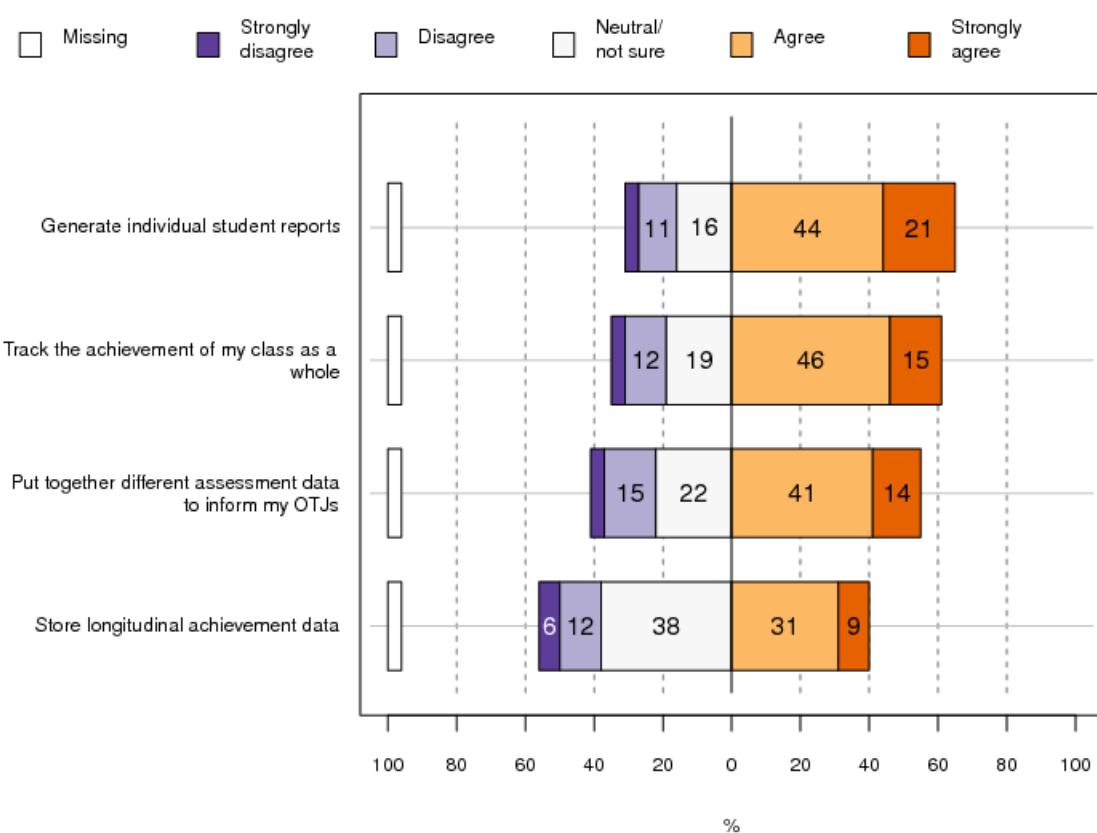
Although just 6 percent of principals indicated that their SMS allowed parents and whānau to view their child's work, schools might be making this available electronically via other channels, such as a class web page, for instance. For example, 13 percent of parents responding viewed class blogs, which might include samples of students' work.

Principals of decile 1–2 schools were more likely to strongly agree that they made effective use of their school's SMS system to: track and alert them to student attendance problems (52 percent); generate reports for the board (48 percent); track student progress on the National Standards (29 percent); log behavioural incidents (38 percent); and identify student strengths and needs in order to design programmes of learning (19 percent).

Effective SMS use is reliant on the teachers. Sixty-one percent said they had good training in how to use their school's SMS, and 66 percent found it easy to use (66 percent). Most teachers had to enter student achievement data themselves (85 percent). Sixteen percent of teachers used the SMS only to enter student attendance, and 10 percent of teachers indicated that they avoided using their school's SMS.

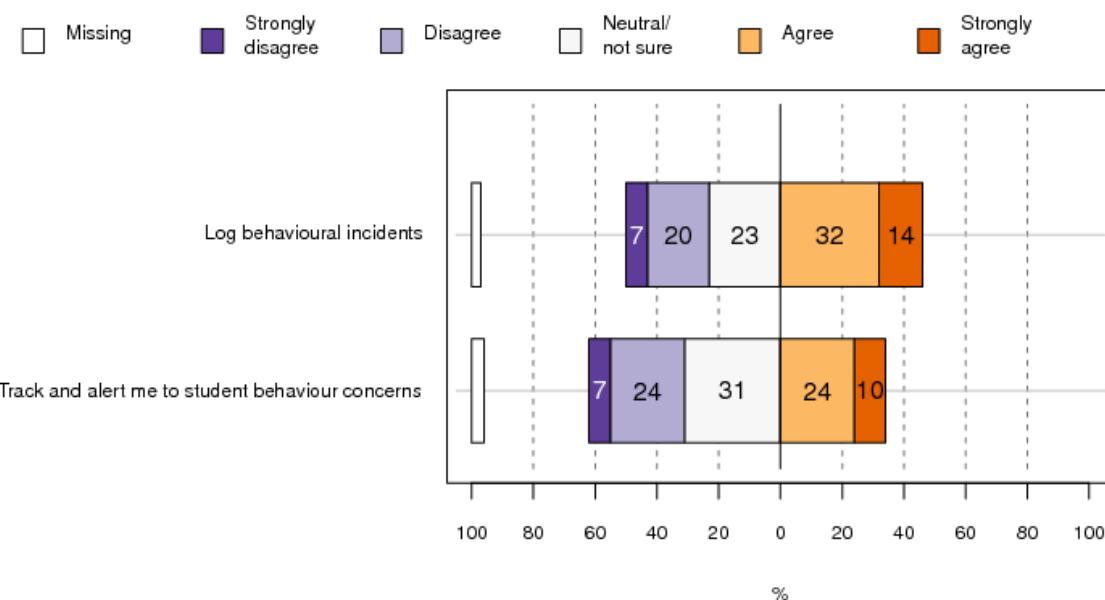
Generating individual student reports and tracking class achievement as a whole were more likely to be done through the SMS than putting together different assessment data to inform OTJs, or to store longitudinal data. Figure 16 has the details.

**Figure 16 Teachers' views on their effective use of their school's SMS in relation to student achievement ( $n = 713$ )**



Less than half of the teachers thought they were effectively using their school's SMS to log behavioural incidents, or to share data on student behavioural concerns.

**Figure 17 Teachers' views on their effective use of their school's SMS in relation to student behaviour (*n* = 713)**



## Internet use for professional and governance use

ICT use to download lesson plans and resources is common among primary teachers (89 percent). Seventy percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Ministry-funded web site [www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz) is a useful source of support and links to information they need. This site is one of a number that provide lesson plans and resources for teachers to download. However, Table 22 shows that many teachers were yet to make ongoing use of ICT and the Internet to link with others for professional discussions and advice, or to support their own ongoing professional development through review.

**Table 22 Teachers' use of ICT and the Internet to get feedback and ideas for teaching  
(n = 713)**

ICT use	Strongly agree %
I download lesson plans and resources	89
I take part in an electronic network of New Zealand teachers	22
I video my teaching and look at it myself	18
I share reflections on my teaching in an e-journal with my principal / senior school leader and identify areas I would like to strengthen	14
I take part in an electronic network of international teachers	12
Other	11
I video my teaching and share with my principal / senior school leader to identify areas I would like to strengthen	10
I ask questions on Twitter	4

Principals were also yet to make much use of online discussion forums (6 percent took part in these) or Twitter (used by 4 percent).

Twenty-six percent of trustees reported using webinar<sup>17</sup>-based training to learn about their role. Slightly more had used Internet material from the Ministry of Education (29 percent) and NZSTA [NZ School Trustees Association] (28 percent) to provide them with advice and support over the last 12 months. Fewer trustees had used material from ERO's website as other advice and support (15 percent). Fifty-six percent of trustees had ready access to online information at their school to help them in their role.

## Communication with parents

A school's website is a conduit for information to its community and to prospective families and whānau. Fifty-five percent of parents were getting up-to-date information about their child's school from the school's website, and 33 percent of parents received school newsletters by email. Thirteen percent were getting information about the school from a class blog. Eight percent of parents said the school's website had influenced their choice of school for their youngest child. ICT use in learning was seen as a draw card by principals, with 52 percent of principals emphasising student use of ICT to encourage students to enrol in their school.

Sixteen percent of parents had online access to their child's school work and progress. Twenty-four percent of parents would like online access to their child's school work and progress. Online access to this information was related to school decile, with only 7 percent of parents whose child was at a decile 1–2 school having such access.

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<sup>17</sup> Webinars are seminars shared through the web that can involve some interaction between facilitators and those logged in through participants posting questions and presenters posting answers.

Internet searches were the main sources of general information about education for 55 percent of parents, and online news sources for 29 percent. However, only 1 percent of parents were using the *Find a School* site on the parents' page of the Ministry of Education's website.

Email was used to survey parents and whānau as part of boards' community consultation (25 percent of trustees). Ten percent of trustees reported that e-learning was an aspect of the school that parents had raised with the board during the year, and 11% of trustees indicated their board had consulted its community about e-learning in that period.

## Looking to the future

Looking ahead to the roll-out of broadband and the Network for Learning, two-thirds of the principals responding commented on the changes they expected to see in their school's professional learning and in students' learning. Most thought these two policies would result in greater use of ICT in their school, particularly uses enabled by better access to the Internet, such as more teaching and learning resources, and opportunities to link with others beyond New Zealand, through cloud-based applications. Other benefits mentioned were greater engagement of teachers and students in learning.

Principals also noted that staff would need professional learning and development to make the most of these two changes, and that their introduction would have implications for school budgets. Twelve percent of the comments expressed reservations or noted potential negative effects. The comments below illustrate the range of views expressed by principals.

Easier access to global community. Looking forward to linking up with a sister city school to share information/ideas/resources. Cloud base information sharing for staff through N4L.

We are hoping to implement BYOD [Bring Your Own Device] and Digital classrooms and full use of our ultra-net. For this to happen we need to upskill our community and assist teachers to develop the pedagogy necessary.

Additional PD [Professional Development] or staff around the inclusion of devices in normal practice. Dealing with raised levels of anxiety in staff who struggle with technologies. Increased PD budget. Ensuring all staff progress. Ensuring students who cannot afford devices are not disadvantaged.

## Summary

E-learning was a pre-occupation in many primary and intermediate schools. Teachers were generally positive about the effects of student use of ICT and about how ICT use in their class was getting them thinking about new ways of teaching and learning.

However, student use of ICT was currently hampered by insufficient or poor-quality equipment, slow or unreliable access or support, and lack of teacher knowledge or skills or a strong and knowledgeable school leader for its use. Despite the focus on e-learning, ICT use in classes was mainly for tasks completed individually, with a marked increase since 2010 in the practising of specific skills. The more collaborative and ‘future-oriented’ uses of ICT had not advanced since 2010, and indeed seem to have taken a backward step. Hopefully, this is something the Network for Learning will seek to address.

Many teachers also expressed concerns about new types of safety issues arising with ICT use in their class, and just over half found that the use of ICT pushed their working day further into their own time.

Electronic student management systems are now integral to school work and the analysis and use of student attendance, behaviour incident and achievement data that is now expected. However, many primary and intermediate schools were reliant on teachers to input and analyse data and lacked a more systemic approach to ensure useful analysis was available for teaching, programme planning and resource allocation.

Interestingly, ICT use by teachers, principals and trustees appears to occur mostly to access resources and information rather than as a means of professional linkage and discussions: its potential here has a long way to go to be realised.



## 8. Challenges facing schools

We asked all four groups surveyed what they thought were the major challenges facing their school, if any, and gave each group a set of 30 items, with a core set of items that were identical for all groups. These give a good overview of common concerns. Principals on average each identified seven challenges, a higher average than in 2010; teachers identified six or seven challenges, trustees four or five challenges, and parents around two challenges. Only 3 percent of trustees, 2 percent of teachers and 1 percent of principals did not identify any issue; however, 17 percent of parents did not identify an issue.

Table 23 brings together the picture from all four groups, with the ‘top 10’ challenges for each group in bold. Funding continues to top the set of challenges identified by principals, teachers, trustees and parents. However, the proportions identifying it have decreased since 2007 for all groups other than teachers. The table shows that principals, teachers and trustees are more likely than parents to see challenges relating to national priorities, resources and providing for all students. Parents are just as likely to be conscious of the need for good teachers, and to be concerned about large class sizes. Decreasing bullying and improving student behaviour also appear in their top 10 challenges facing their school.

Table 23 Challenges facing the school

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Principals (n = 180) %</b>	<b>Teachers (n = 713) %</b>	<b>Trustees (n = 277) %</b>	<b>Parents (n = 684) %</b>
Funding	<b>66</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>39</b>
Adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access	<b>54</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>32</b>	10
E-learning	<b>53</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>21</b>	10
Too much is being asked of schools	<b>42</b>	<b>51</b>	15	<b>12</b>
Property	<b>38</b>	25	<b>43</b>	<b>15</b>
Providing a balanced curriculum	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>	15	<b>12</b>
Insufficient support for students with special education needs	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	14	8
Improving student achievement	<b>35</b>	25	<b>27</b>	11
Improving Māori student achievement	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	7
Realising the promise of NZC	<b>29</b>	10	7	*
Publication of National Standards data by school	28	22	*	*
Insufficient support for professional learning	28	16	9	4
Increasing parent support for their children's learning	28	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>17</b>
Keeping good teachers	25	21	16	<b>28</b>
Some staff are resistant to change	24	<b>30</b>	16	7
Large class sizes	18	<b>38</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>
Improving student behaviour	12	17	11	<b>17</b>
Decreasing bullying	6	8	7	<b>15</b>
Motivating & engaging students	21	17	11	<b>13</b>
Partnership with parents/whānau	23	21	<b>31</b>	*
Declining school roll	18	17	<b>24</b>	8

\* = Not asked. Figures in bold are the “top 10” challenges for each group.

## Principals' views

Three resource-related aspects were among the top five issues identified by principals: funding (66 percent), adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access (54 percent), and property maintenance and development (38 percent). Forty-two percent thought that a challenge for their school was that too much was being asked of schools.

Curriculum-related provision accounted for three other items within this group's top 10: e-learning (53 percent), providing a balanced curriculum (37 percent) and realising the promise of NZC (29 percent). Most of the rest of the top 10 items were related to national priorities: a concern about insufficient support for students with special education needs (overlapping with resources), voiced by 37 percent, and challenges relating to improving student achievement generally (35 percent, the same as in 2010) and improving the school's Māori student achievement (29 percent, increased from 19 percent in 2010).

Three items fell just outside this top 10, identified by 28 percent each. They are the challenges associated with publication of National Standards data by schools, insufficient support for professional learning, and increasing parent support for their children's learning.

There were some clear patterns related to school decile. The lower the decile, the more challenges there were relating to student learning, attendance and behaviour, and keeping good teachers, and the less likely that e-learning, providing a balanced curriculum, or realising the promise of NZC would be identified. For example, the lower the school decile, the more principals noted the challenge for their school of increasing student achievement generally (67 percent, falling to 20 percent of decile 9–10 school principals), for Māori students (48 percent, falling to 11 percent of decile 9–10 school principals), and for Pasifika students (24 percent, falling to 7 percent of decile 9–10 school principals). Decile 9–10 school principals were least challenged to keep good teachers (11 percent, compared with 25 percent overall), and most challenged to provide e-learning (72 percent, compared with 33 percent of decile 1–2 school principals).

## Teachers' views

Teachers also included four resource-related challenges in their top 10: funding (60 percent), the adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access (53 percent), large class sizes (38 percent), and insufficient support for students with special education needs (30 percent). Their other top 10 items underlined the impression gained from their responses to questions on workload that a common challenge is gaining a sense of coherence in their work. Fifty-one percent thought a challenge for their school was that too much was being asked of schools; 41 percent were looking at how to provide e-learning, 40 percent to provide a balanced curriculum and 33 percent to increase parent support for their children's learning (suggesting new approaches needed); 30 percent thought that some staff were resistant to change. Thirty percent also saw increasing Māori student achievement as a major challenge for their school, up from 19 percent in 2010.

A similar decile-related pattern was evident among teachers' identification of challenges for their school, with teachers at decile 1–2 schools most likely to identify challenges relating to improving student achievement, attendance, keeping good teachers and increasing parent support for their child's learning (60 percent, decreasing to 18 percent of decile 9–10 teachers), or community support (27 percent, decreasing to 8 percent of decile 9–10 school teachers). But school decile

was not clearly related to teachers' views on whether the adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access, or e-learning, was a challenge for their school.

## **Trustees' views**

Funding (55 percent), property (43 percent), increasing parent support for their children's learning (34 percent), the adequacy of ICT equipment and Internet access (32 percent), partnerships with parents/whānau (31 percent), improving Māori student achievement (30 percent), improving student achievement (generally) (27 percent), a declining school roll (24 percent), e-learning (21 percent) and large class sizes (20 percent) were the top 10 challenges facing their school that trustees identified.

While funding consistently topped the list of challenges identified, the proportion of trustees identifying it as a challenge for their school has decreased over the last 6 years, from 71 percent in 2007 and 65 percent in 2010, to 55 percent in 2013. However, a major budget item, property, was more to the fore again: it had fallen from 43 percent in 2007 to 29 percent of trustees identifying it as a challenge for the school in 2010, but it returned to 43 percent in 2013. The national policy emphasis on raising Māori achievement levels had borne fruit in a doubling of the proportion of trustees who identified it as a challenge (30 percent in 2013, compared with 14 percent in 2010).

Improving student attendance and behaviour was most likely to be identified by trustees in decile 1–2 schools (24 percent each, compared with 8 and 11 percent, respectively, in decile 9–10 schools). Māori student achievement was a school challenge for 46 percent of decile 1–4 school trustees, compared with 9 percent of decile 9–10 school trustees. The higher the school decile, the more likely it was that trustees would identify e-learning as a challenge for their school (21 percent of decile 9–10 school trustees, compared with 6 percent of decile 1–2 school trustees). Property maintenance and development was a major challenge at the schools of 61 percent of the decile 9–10 school trustees, compared with 43 percent of trustees overall.

## **Parents' views**

Parents were not as conscious as trustees, principals and teachers of the challenges facing their school, or of the day-to-day processes and priorities that underpin teaching and learning. Parents were focused on the learning and social experience of children: their top 10 was keeping good teachers (28 percent), large class sizes (24 percent), increasing parent support for children's learning (17 percent), improving student behaviour (17 percent), decreasing bullying (15 percent), property maintenance or development (15 percent), motivating students (13 percent), providing a balanced curriculum (13 percent), and improving student achievement (12 percent). Thirteen percent thought too much was being asked of schools.

There are suggestions of some differences related to ethnicity, though these would need to be checked with larger numbers of parents in each ethnic group. In this sample, Pasifika parents tended to identify more issues than other parents, including 29 percent who saw improving Pasifika student achievement as a major challenge facing their child's school. Among Māori parents, 29 percent identified improving Māori student achievement as a major challenge facing their child's school. Both groups were also more likely to identify increasing parent support for their children's learning as a major challenge (26 percent of Māori parents did so, as did 32 percent of Pasifika parents). Asian parents were particularly concerned with teaching quality (32 percent), compared with 9 percent overall), providing a balanced curriculum (27 percent) and property (29 percent).

Parents of children in decile 1–2 schools were most likely to see improving student behaviour and attendance, increasing parent support for their children's learning, motivating students, improving student performance for Māori, Pasifika and students with special needs, responding to cultural diversity among students, and community support as challenges for their school. Large class sizes were most likely to be identified by parents whose children attended decile 3–8 schools. Property maintenance and development was most likely to be identified by parents whose children attended decile 9–10 schools.

## Summary

Some common themes as well as diversity related to differences in schools and their particular communities are evident in the main challenges that people working in schools or for them, and parents saw. Resources came to the fore. Meeting student needs well also came to the fore. There was more awareness of the need to increase Māori student achievement. Principal and teacher answers indicated awareness of greater expectations of schools.



## **9. The principal role and workload**

This chapter covers principals' views of their work, including their achievements, workload and morale, things they would like to change about their role, their length of principal experience and previous roles, and their plans for the future.

### **Principals' achievements**

Principals were asked to identify their main achievements over the last 3 years, from a list of 33 likely items, with space to add others. Most of these items were also asked in 2010. Table 24 shows the wide range of school leadership responsibilities. On average, principals identified 17 different achievements. While the pattern of these achievements is similar to 2010, proportions were often lower. Particularly striking in the light of the policy focus on raising student achievement over the last 3 years are the lower rather than higher proportions of principals identifying as one of their own achievements that student performance levels stayed high or improved, or that use of student assessment data stayed high or improved. In tandem with principals' earlier answers about gaps in the support available to them (see chapter 2), this might indicate that the policy focus has not been sufficiently accompanied by a coherent infrastructure of support and knowledge building for schools.

Table 24 Principals' main achievements in the last 3 years

Achievement	2010 (n = 207)	2013 (n = 180)
	%	%
School reputation remained good or improved	80	80
Retained/built effective teachers	81	76
Student behaviour stayed positive or improved	88	76
Student performance levels stayed high or improved	82	70
More use of e-learning	*	69
Use of student assessment data to plan learning was good or improved	82	69
Developed ongoing cycle of curriculum review and development	*	68
Increased focus on meeting individual students' needs or targeted groups' needs	77	68
Building/grounds quality stayed good or improved	71	67
School has a more focused approach to pedagogy	77	64
Created a stronger professional learning and inquiry culture in school through learning teams	59	64
Roll remained stable or grew in a manageable way	60	64
Overall quality of teaching staff stayed high or improved	66	63
Provided more leadership opportunities for school's teachers	69	63
Retained/built a school culture that is inclusive of students with special education needs	66	60
I remained optimistic	68	60
Retained/built a strengths-based school culture	70	59
Recruited effective teachers	63	59
We now have a clearer 'big picture'	69	57
Developed student leadership roles	69	53
School senior leadership team remained strong or got stronger	55	53
Māori student performance levels stayed high or improved	67	51
Strengthened processes for working with and consulting with parent/whānau community	59	50
Offered a good range of extracurricular activities	49	48
Built a stronger focus on what it means to be culturally aware across the school	*	46
Kept the ship afloat	51	35
Built stronger relationships with local iwi and marae	*	28
A crisis we experienced did not overwhelm us	30	25
Pasifika student performance levels stayed high or improved	34	22
Found new revenue to support new initiatives	29	22
Student attendance improved	21	17
Got school back into the black from a deficit	19	15
Built stronger relationships with the local Pasifika community	*	14

\* = Not asked

There were some decile-related differences in achievements identified by principals. Decile 1–2 school principals were more likely than others to mention strengthening relationships with their school community, improving student attendance and increasing the focus on meeting the needs of individual students and groups of students. Principals of decile 9–10 schools were more likely to mention high or improving levels of student performance.

## Workload and morale

On average, principals worked 56 to 60 hours a week, much the same since 2003, despite increasing demands on school leadership. This suggests that nationally there is a limit on the time people can actually give to the multifaceted principal role.

In 2013 primary and intermediate principals were less involved in teaching students than in 2010. This suggests that it has become harder for principals to carry out their school leadership and management responsibilities if they also teach. Twenty-seven percent had no teaching responsibilities, up from 23 percent in 2010. Principals' teaching responsibilities included:

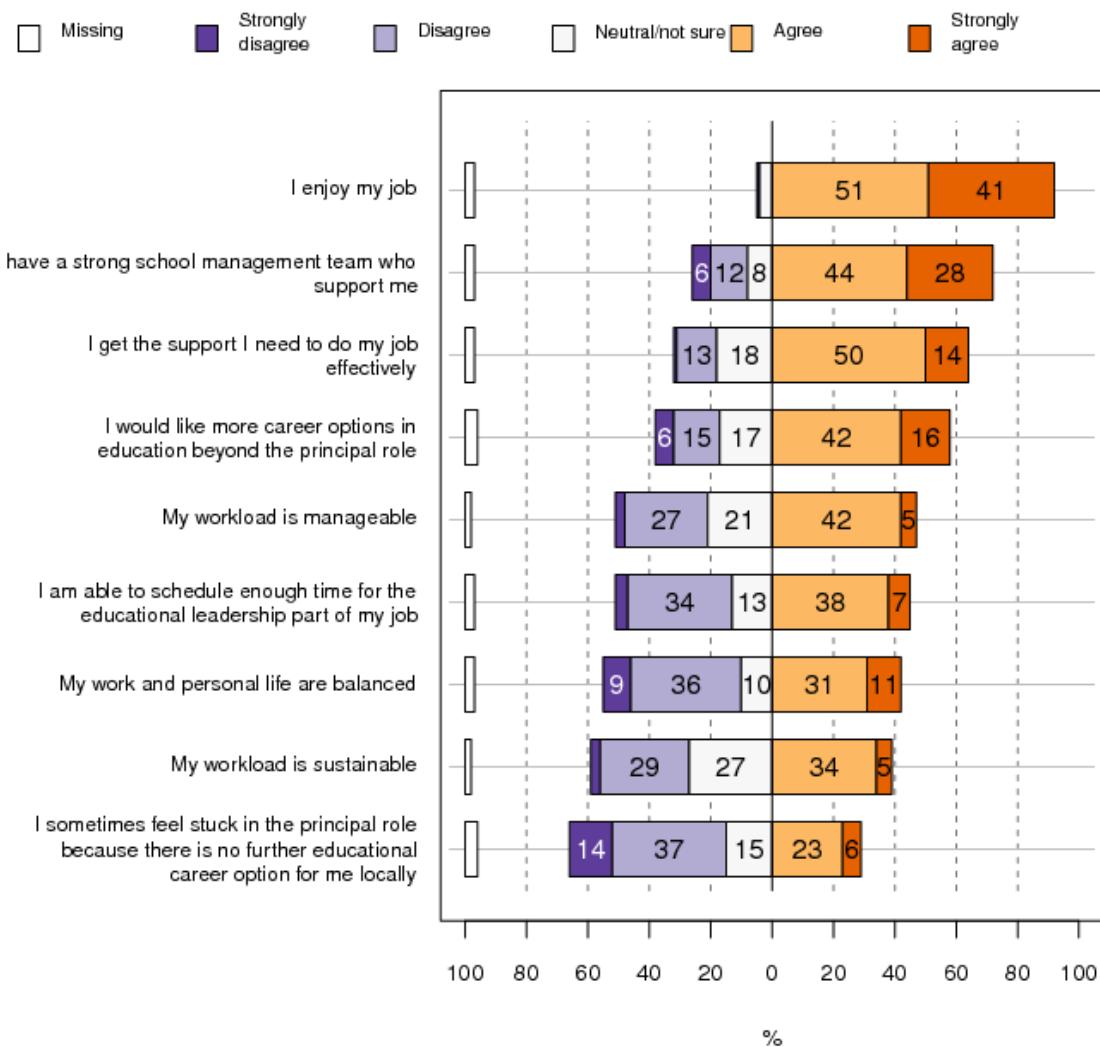
- relieving for absent teachers (34 percent in 2013, compared with 44 percent in 2010)
- full responsibility for a class at least 1 hour a day (19 percent, compared with 26 percent in 2010)
- modelling lessons for teachers (18 percent, compared with 26 percent in 2010)
- teaching specific groups or programmes, including literacy or numeracy (remedial or extension), kapa haka, music, and rugby coaching (17 percent, not asked in 2010).

Relieving for absent teachers is likely to include unplanned needs to step in to cover, either because a suitable reliever cannot be found or because the school budget is pressed.

Overall, principal morale had dropped since 2010: 72 percent of principals said their morale was good or very good, compared with the 87 percent of principals who strongly agreed or agreed that their morale was good in 2010. Alongside a drop in morale was an increase in stress levels: 48 percent rated their stress level as high or extremely high, compared with 37 percent in 2010 and 42 percent in 2007. This was accompanied by some slippage in reported health, participation in fitness activity and tiredness levels. Nonetheless, 73 percent of principals were quite optimistic or very optimistic about their role and life as a school principal, slightly down from 79 percent in 2010.

Most principals enjoyed their job and felt supported by a strong school management team. Less than half thought their workload was manageable or sustainable, or that they could schedule enough time for the educational leadership part of their role. Just over half said they would like more career options in education beyond the principal's role, with a quarter sometimes feeling stuck in the principal's role because there was no further educational career option for them locally. Figure 18 has the details.

Figure 18 Principals' views of their work ( $n = 180$ )



Principals' views of their role were a little less positive in 2013 compared with 2010. Three years ago 53 percent strongly agreed that they enjoyed their job, compared with 41 percent in 2013. Seventy-seven percent thought they got the support they needed to do the job effectively in 2010, compared with 64 percent in 2013. Fifty-eight percent thought their workload was manageable in 2010, compared with 47 percent in 2013. However, it appears that principals were making real efforts to focus on educational leadership, with 46 percent reporting they could schedule enough time for this part of their role in 2013, up from 38 percent in 2010.

## Support for the principal's role

The principal's role should also be supported through the annual performance review they have with their board chair, or an educational professional employed by their board to provide this review. These processes do not seem to be used as well as they could. Just over a third (34

percent) of principals gained new insight from their last performance appraisal into how they could do things. While most principals (78 percent) felt they received good acknowledgement of their contribution to the school, frank discussions of issues at the school and joint problem solving were not widespread, and had dipped since 2010 (43 percent in 2013 compared with 52 percent in 2010). Discussions of challenges for the school and joint strategic thinking had also decreased since 2010 (39 percent, compared with 47 percent in 2010).

Principals' performance reviews were used to agree on goals to move the school forward for 65 percent of the principals, a figure unchanged since 2007, despite changes in the standards included in collective contracts and a greater emphasis on school goals and targets in school planning and reporting requirements. There was a little progress on the use of these reviews on goals to move the principal forward (63 percent, compared with 57 percent in 2010).

Decile 9–10 school principals appeared to benefit least from their performance reviews in terms of new insight into how they could do things (15 percent reported this).

In 2013 there was a general decrease in Ministry of Education-funded support for the principal's role that principals reported compared with 2010, other than the NZSTA helpdesk and webinars (see Table 25). In particular, use of the Educational Leaders website dropped from 65 percent in 2010 to 43 percent in 2013, and fewer principals had used NZSTA employment and industrial relations advisers, though in this case the lower figure might be due to our asking about the last 2 years in the 2013 survey, compared with asking about the last 3 years in the 2010 survey.

Only 16 percent of principals had accessed Ministry of Education-funded leadership support, which was re-contracted from 2011. This is much lower than the 47 percent of principals who had used the former School Support Services Leadership and Management advisers over the 3 years up to 2010.

**Table 25 Ministry of Education-funded support for the principal's role, used by principals over the last 2 years**

	2010 (n = 207) %	2013 (n = 180) %
NZSTA Helpdesk	49	50
Educational Leaders website	65	43
Webinar	46	43
NZSTA employment & industrial relations advisers	52	37
First-time principals' programme	38	26
Leadership and assessment professional development through MoE contracted providers	*	16
Sabbatical	*	14
Nothing	7	8
SchoolSMART	13	6
Other	6	6
Aspiring principal's course	9	4

\* = Not asked

Eighty-six percent of the principals took part in non-Ministry-funded principal networks or groups, much the same proportion as in 2010. To put it another way, around 14 percent of principals do *not* take part in any of these collegial networks, a rather high proportion for leaders of self-managed schools who can become quite isolated in the New Zealand system, which lacks structural connections across schools.

Principals who connect with their peers were connecting more in 2013 than in 2010: attending meetings (86 percent of those who took part in networks or groups in 2013, up from 78 percent in 2010), discussing common issues (79 percent, up from 62 percent), attending conferences (71 percent, up from 62 percent), or providing mutual support (75 percent, up from 56 percent).

Twenty percent of principals who were taking part in non-Ministry-funded networks or groups were mentoring another principal, and 11 percent were themselves being mentored by another principal. Twenty-three percent had a critical friendship that was based on structured visits to each other's schools, and 20 percent were part of an inquiry project to improve practice. Fifteen percent indicated they were part of other networks or groups, such as a local ICT initiative, the Ariki Project or a moderation cluster. Six percent took an active part in an online discussion forum, and 4 percent were using Twitter to get advice or ideas.

## Changes principals would like in their work

Table 26 outlines the things a quarter or more of the principals said they would most like to change about their work, with an overall indication that principals wanted greater coherence in their work and more time to focus on their role of leading the school, rather than administration.

Table 26 Principals' desired changes to their work ( $n = 180$ )

Change	%
More time to reflect / read / be innovative	68
More time to focus on educational leadership	59
Reduce administration/paperwork	54
Improve public understanding of education	48
Have more administrative staff support	42
Have a more balanced life	42
Reduce demands of property management	36
More teaching staff to delegate to	33
More contact with other principals or schools	30
Reduce external agencies' demands/expectations	29
More parental interest in their children's learning	28
More professional dialogue about my work	28
Reduce human resource management demands	28
Higher salary	26

## Pathways to the principalship

Immediately prior to their first principalship, 71 percent of principals responding to the 2013 National Survey had held a role of responsibility in a school, a similar proportion to 2010 and 2007. Fifty-one percent had been a deputy principal, 7 percent an assistant principal, 9 percent a syndicate leader, and 4 percent a Scale A teacher with management units. Three percent had been school advisers or had provided professional development. Only one principal had been a Ministry of Education official.

All but 10 percent of the principals responding had at least 6 years' classroom teaching experience before becoming a principal. Thirty-four percent of those who had also had some school leadership experience had had less than 2 years of such experience.

Most principals (72 percent) had never worked in education outside schools. Nine percent had worked as advisers with School Support or a university (up from 5 percent in 2010, suggesting that the ending of School Support Services led some advisers into school leadership), and 4

percent as a college of education or university lecturer. Four percent each had worked for either ERO or the Ministry of Education at the local or regional level. Three percent had worked for a private consultancy or professional development firm, and 2 percent on their own as private consultants.

There seems to have been a lower turnover of principals: only 12 percent of principals had less than 3 years' experience in 2013, compared with 19 percent in 2010. Thirty-one percent of principals had been principals for 16 or more years.

Most principals had experience of leading just one school (44 percent) or two schools (22 percent). Thirteen percent had led three schools and 17 percent had led between four and six schools.

## Plans for the future

A similar proportion of principals (61 percent) were intending to continue as principal of their current school as in the previous two surveys, but fewer were thinking of changing to another school (25 percent, down from 39 percent in 2010). There was increased interest in breaks from the principalship (41 percent, up from 34 percent in 2010). Since 2007 there had been a steady decline in the number of principals who were intending to leave education in the next 5 years; in 2007, 42 percent planned either to retire or to change to a different career, decreasing to 32 percent in 2010 and to 26 percent in 2013.

Currently there is not a shortage of teachers indicating interest in taking on the principal role, nor signs of more principals about to leave the profession than can be replaced, at least in terms of numbers. The questions around principal supply are more to do with ensuring an adequate development for those interested in taking the role, and ongoing development and support for those in the role. There is also a question about the lack of further roles for principals that allow them to use and further develop their knowledge and skills for the wider education system. The *Investing in Educational Success* policy offers some opportunities along these lines, but its efficacy will depend on how well the new groups of schools share a common purpose and infrastructure and how well supported they are.

## Summary

Primary and intermediate principals continue to enjoy their jobs: the nature of their work is inherently fulfilling, and almost all those responding could identify some achievements from their work in relation to student performance, engagement and more systematic ways in which the school was working over the last 3 years. Set against this was a drop in morale and increases in stress since 2010. Although more principals reported than in 2010 that they can schedule enough

time for educational leadership, it remained hard to manage or sustain the principal workload. Fewer principals thought they had the support they needed for their role in 2013 compared with 2010. There was less use of Ministry of Education-funded support (and less professional learning development for principals available), and performance reviews continued not to be used as well as they should. Principals who connected with other principals (not all; 14 percent did not) were doing this more than in 2010, but more to discuss common issues and provide mutual support than for professional learning, such as critical friendships, mentoring or learning-focused networks.

Principals appeared to be staying longer in their roles, with more interest in breaks from the role and continued high interest in opportunities to work in education beyond the principal role.



## 10. Teachers' perspectives on their work

We start this chapter with a look at primary and intermediate teachers' reports of their achievements, and of their morale and workload. Then we look at their working environment, particularly the extent to which teachers are working in the professional learning communities that are most likely to support good teaching practice, and their experiences of formal professional learning and development. We end the chapter with a description of the changes teachers would like to see in their work, and their career plans for the next 5 years.

### Teachers' achievements

Looking back over the previous 3 years, around two-thirds of the teachers thought they had generally achieved improvements in student achievement and engagement in their class, and had changed some of their teaching practices, including the use of ICT (see Table 27). They were less likely to identify gains as a result of their work in relation to behaviour, involving parents and whānau with students' learning, or better meeting the needs of the Government's priority learner groups. Only 30 percent thought they had been able to use National Standards in a positive way. Only 15 percent saw themselves using a new approach as a result of *NZC*. However, more teachers than in 2010 saw as an achievement the further development of students' competencies such as self-management or independent learning (55 percent, up from 44 percent in 2010).

Table 27 Teachers' main achievements over the last 3 years ( $n = 713$ )

Achievement	2013 %
Improvements in student <i>achievement</i>	72
Used ICT in new ways for student learning	70
Used new pedagogical approaches/teaching practices	67
Increased student engagement level in my classes	64
Further developed students' competencies such as self-management or independent learning	55
Improved student assessment for learning	41
Improvement of student <i>behaviour</i>	39
Took active role in more collective way of working at the school	37
Further developed students' social and emotional competencies	34
Used National Standards in a positive way in my teaching	30
Better at meeting the needs of students with <i>special education needs</i>	28
More involvement of parents and whānau with students' learning	28
Better at meeting the needs of Māori students	25
Used new approaches as a result of NZC	15
Better at meeting the needs of Pasifika students	12
Nothing has really changed	1

Teachers in decile 1–2 schools were the most likely to mention improvements in student achievement and behaviour, and that they were better at meeting the needs of Pasifika students. They and teachers in decile 3–4 schools were most likely to say they were better at meeting the needs of Māori students, and that they had gained more involvement of parents and whānau with their students' learning.

## Morale and workload

Almost all primary and intermediate teachers responding enjoyed their jobs (94 percent, much the same as 2010 and 2007). Seventy-four percent of teachers reported overall morale levels that were very good or good. This is somewhat lower than the 86 percent in the 2010 National Survey who agreed or strongly agreed that their morale was good.

Teachers were also slightly less positive in 2013 than in 2010 about the fairness of their workload (49 percent agreed it was fair in 2013, compared with 56 percent in 2010). Their views on the manageability of their workload and of work-related stress were similar in 2013 and 2010. In 2013, 54 percent thought their workload was manageable and 58 percent that they could manage

the level of work-related stress in their job. Thirty-two percent of teachers thought their high workload prevented them from doing justice to their students.

Eighty-six percent of the teachers responding thought they got the in-school support they needed to do their job effectively, but only 62 percent thought they got the support they needed from outside the school to do their job effectively.

Most teachers had multiple responsibilities in their school. Teachers with a single role in their school were in the minority (35 percent), with 60 percent of teachers having from two to five roles, including various combinations such as classroom teacher, deputy principal, senior teacher, mentor/tutor teacher, assistant principal, staff rep on the school board, or curriculum leader for English. This is a slight increase on the 54 percent of teachers with two to five roles at the time of NZCER's 2010 survey. In 2013, 42 percent of teachers were receiving a management unit. Most teachers responding (85 percent) were in permanent positions, with 14 percent on fixed-term contracts—little changed since 2010.

To undertake these roles and to work with other teachers, teachers are given some non-contact time within timetabled hours. Despite the somewhat greater proportion of teachers having more than one role in their school in 2007, the median number of non-contact hours each week was 1.6 hours, down slightly from the median of 2 hours per week in 2010. In both years, 88 percent of teachers indicated they usually got their timetabled non-contact time.

The median number of hours worked on top of the 32.5 classroom hours each week was 18 in the 2007, 2010 and 2013 National Surveys, suggesting that it is difficult for this to increase further for the profession as a whole. However, there has been an increase in those working more than 25 hours a week on top of school hours: from 7 percent in 2007 to 12 percent in 2010 (when National Standards were introduced), and 13 percent in 2013.

## Schools as professional learning cultures

Between 2007 and 2010 there was a marked development in the way primary and intermediate schools operated as professional learning cultures.<sup>18</sup> This was probably related to the focus on putting *NZC* into effect at each school, since this could not be done unless there was a more collaborative approach. It is also likely to be related to a national emphasis on effective school leadership practices.<sup>19</sup> The 2013 National Survey data show some small increases over 2010, but these are limited, suggesting that further development of schools as professional learning cultures stalled over the last 3 years.

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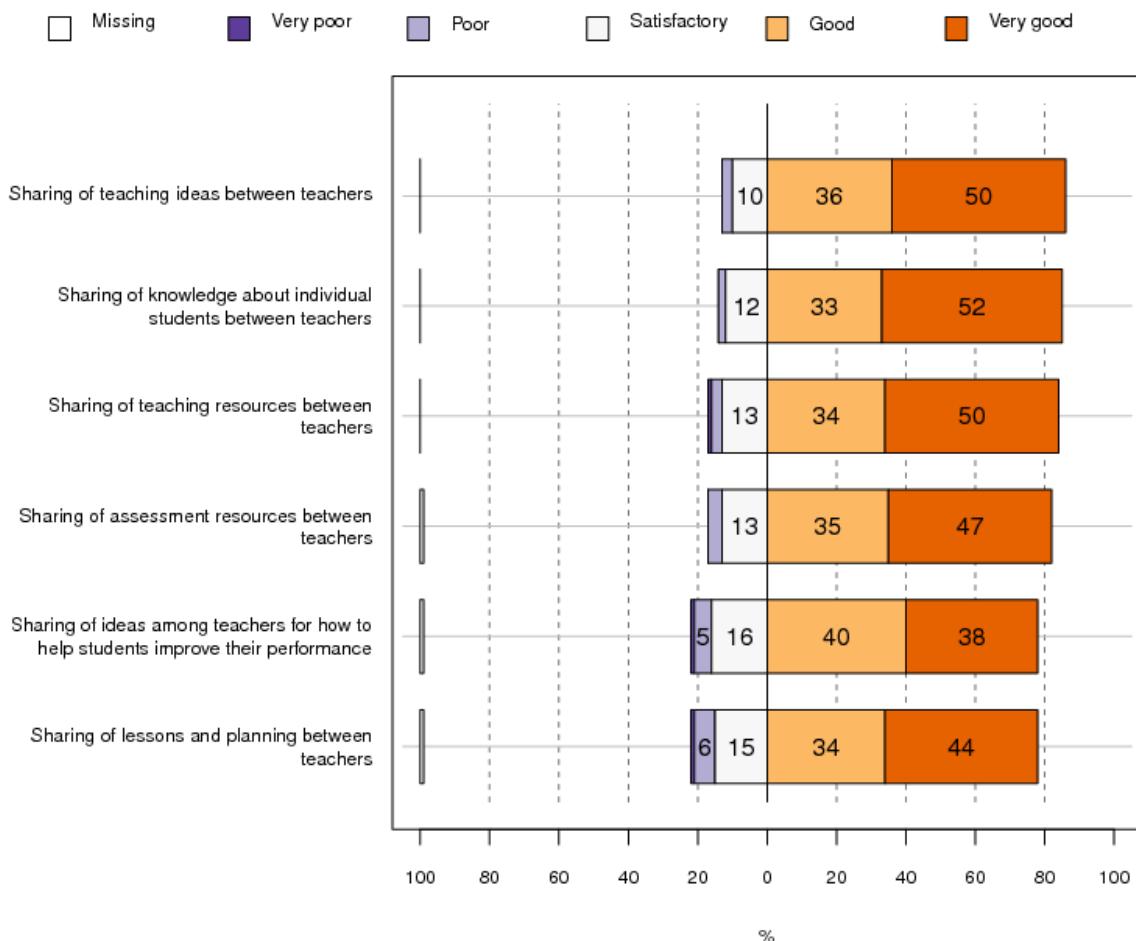
<sup>18</sup> C. Wylie (2011). Opportunities for teacher collaborative practices in a self-managed school system: the New Zealand experience. Paper given at the AERA annual meeting, New Orleans.

<http://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/opportunities-for-teacher-collaborative-practices.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> C. Wylie (2012). *Vital Connections. Why we need more than self-managing schools*. Wellington: NZCER Press. pp. 174–178.

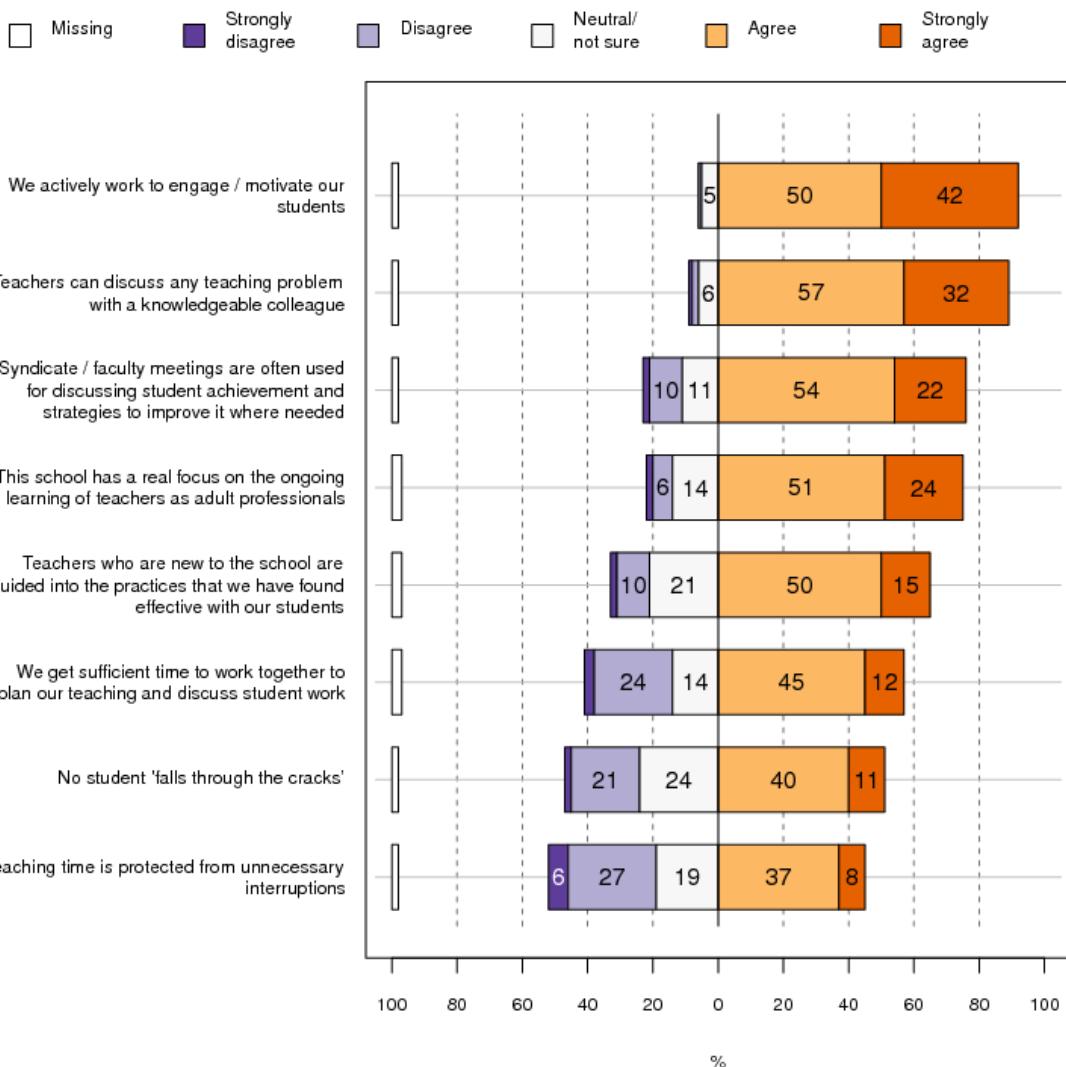
Primary and intermediate schools have traditionally had high levels of sharing between teachers, and here there was an indication of small shifts upwards since 2010, perhaps related to the emphasis on National Standards.

Figure 19 Sharing between teachers (*n* = 713)



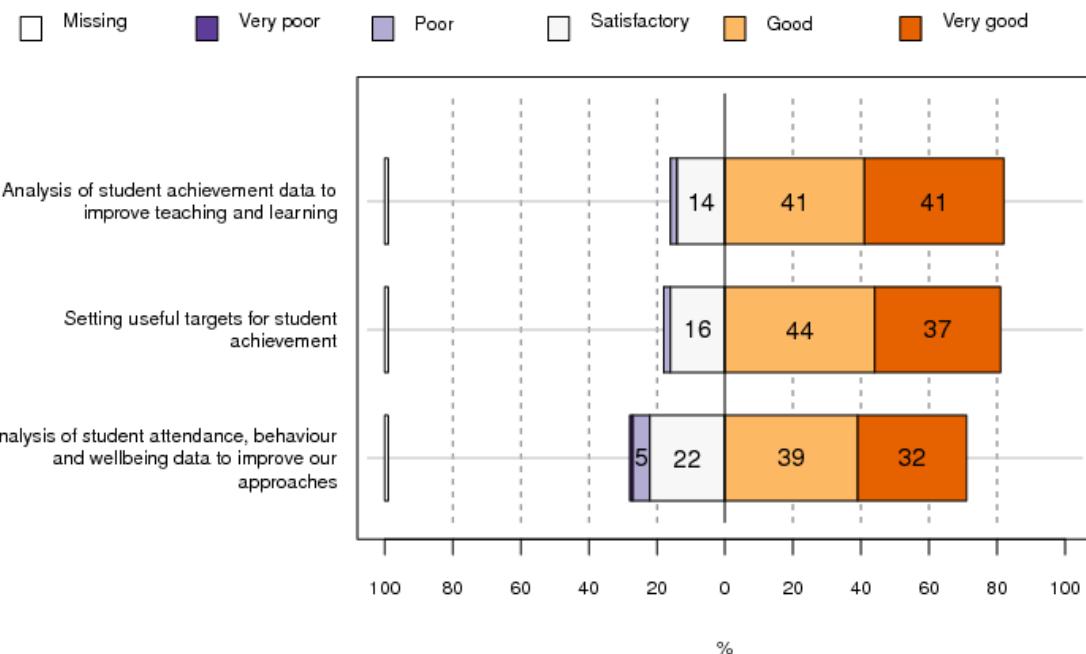
Most primary teachers work in collegial environments, where school meetings are used to focus on student achievement. However, only 57 percent got sufficient time to plan their teaching and discuss student work together, only 51 percent thought no student at the school ‘falls through the cracks’, and only 45 percent thought their teaching time was protected from unnecessary interruptions. The picture in Figure 20 below is unchanged since 2010.

Figure 20 Working together in schools (teachers,  $n = 713$ )



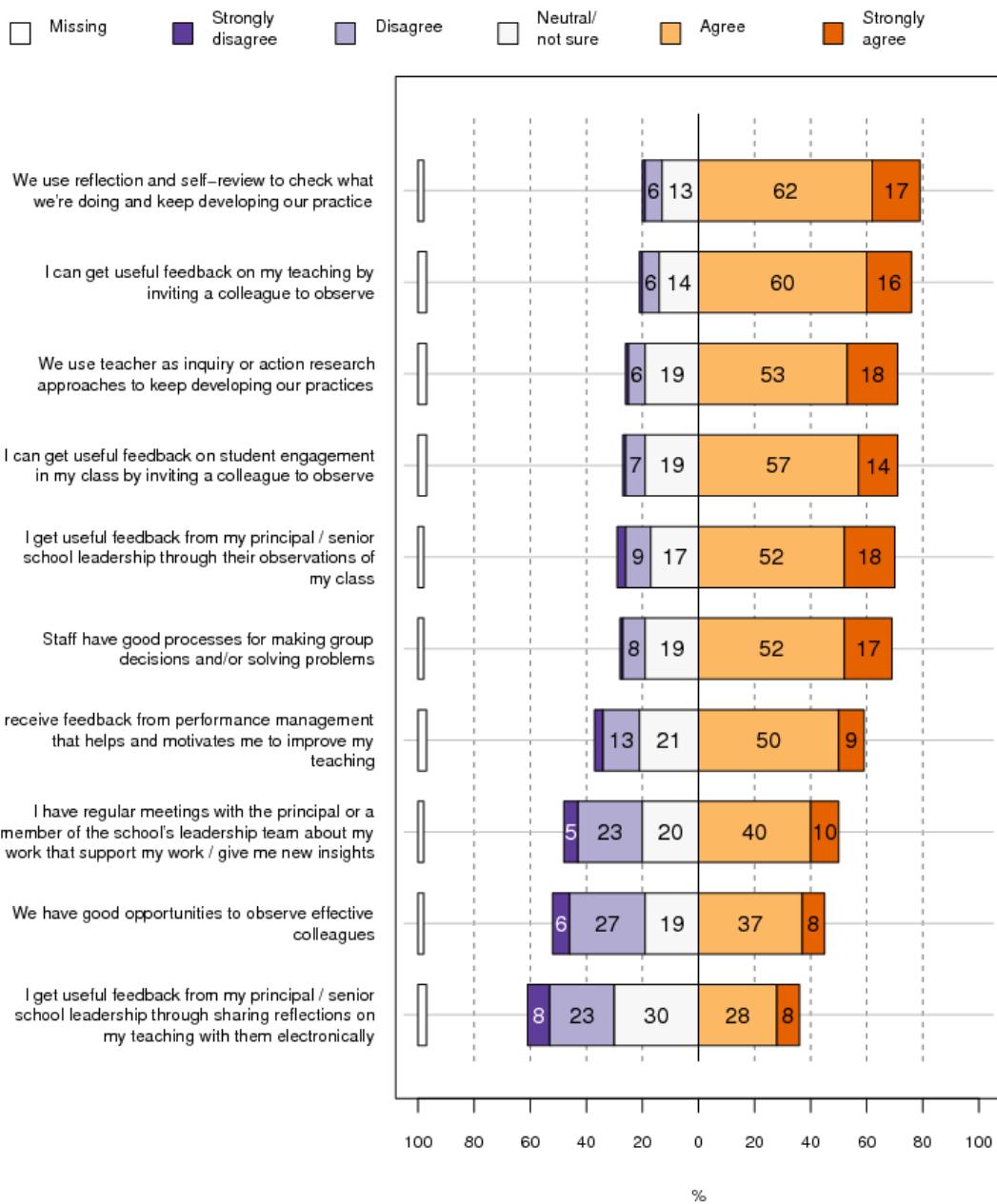
Most teachers reported the analysis of student achievement and other data to improve teaching and learning, and were positive about the quality of their school's targets for student achievement (see Figure 21). Analysis of student achievement data to improve teaching and learning was reported at the same level in 2010: it has not increased since the introduction of National Standards.

Figure 21 Data analysis and targets (teachers,  $n = 713$ )



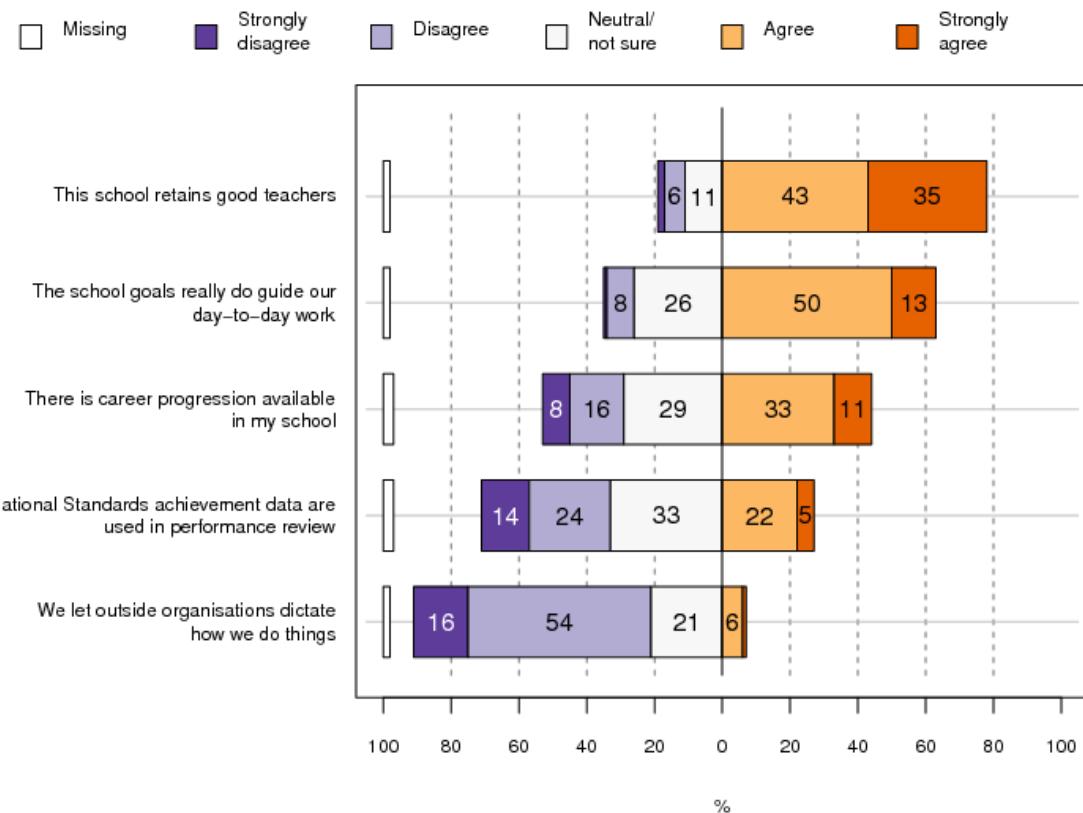
Most teachers could get feedback on their teaching from colleagues' or the principal's observation of their practice, a pattern that had remained much the same since 2010. However, Figure 22 (below) also shows a drop in the proportion of those who reported good opportunities to observe effective colleagues, from 58 percent in 2010 to 45 percent in 2013. Combining reflection with electronic sharing was occurring for 34 percent of the teachers.

Figure 22 Feedback and reflection in teaching practice (teachers,  $n = 713$ )



The majority of teachers thought their school retained good teachers (see Figure 23). Less than half felt there was career progression available to them in their school. National Standards achievement data were being used as part of the performance review of 27 percent of teachers. Note that few teachers thought that outside organisations dictated *how* things were done at their school: school culture and ways of working were seen to be in the hands of school leaders.

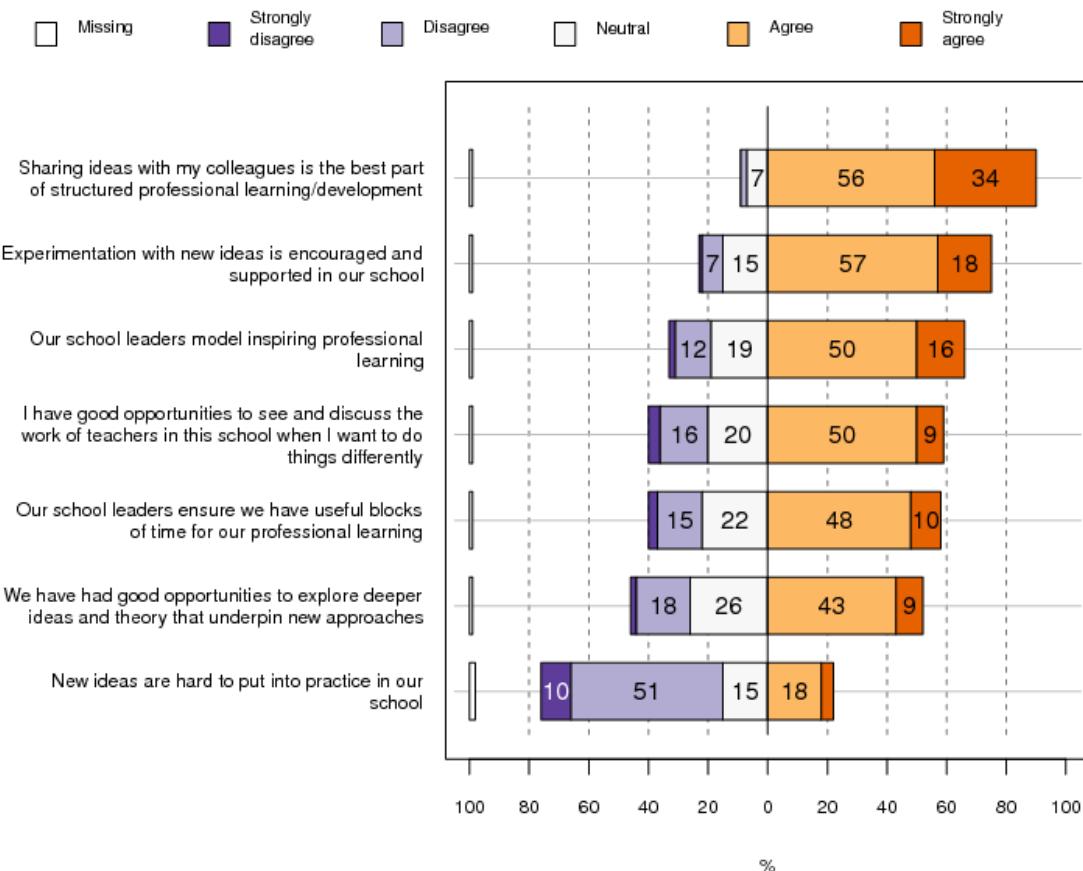
Figure 23 School ways of working: professional considerations (teachers,  $n = 713$ )



## Teachers' experiences of professional learning

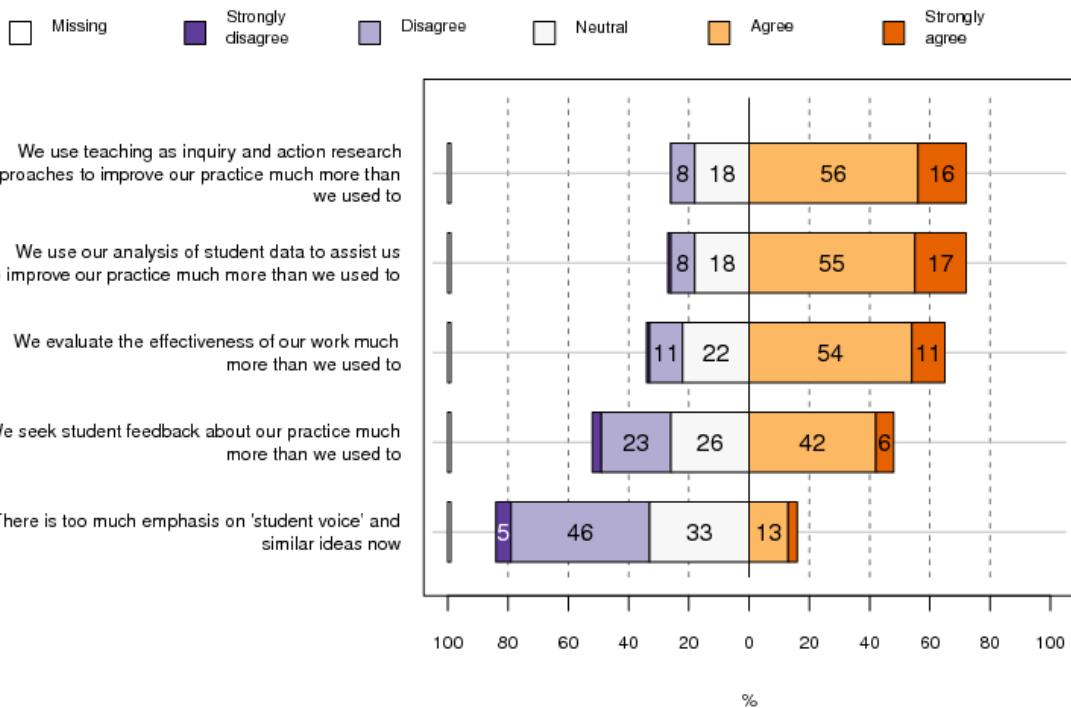
Ongoing professional learning is a crucial part of teaching, particularly when expectations of improved learning for a wider range of students are high. Reporting on their professional learning and development over the past 2 to 3 years, most teachers were positive about their sharing of ideas with colleagues, the way their school leaders modelled inspiring professional learning, and their ability to introduce new ideas into practice. However, Figure 24 (below) also shows that just over half thought their leaders ensured they had useful blocks of time for professional learning, or that they had good opportunities to explore ideas and theory underpinning new approaches.

Figure 24 Professional learning opportunities in schools (teachers,  $n = 713$ )



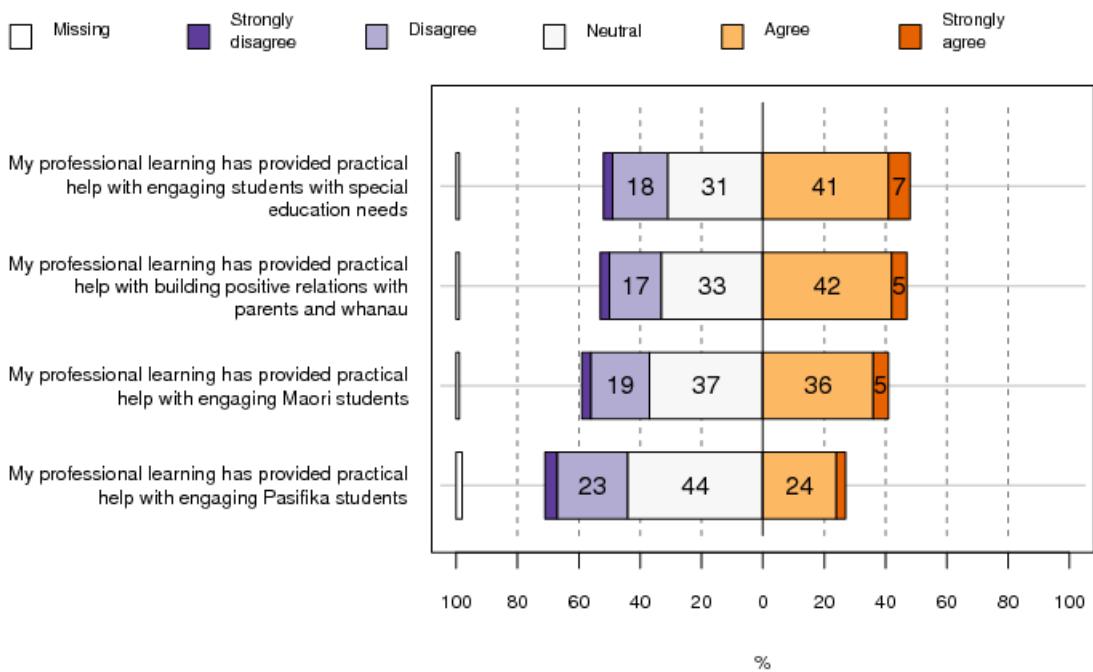
Around two-thirds of the teachers said their school had increased its use of three processes that should contribute to ongoing improvements in practice: inquiry and action research, analysis of student data, and evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching. Figure 25 also shows that nearly half the teachers thought their school sought student feedback about teaching much more than they used to.

Figure 25 Use of inquiry to improve teaching practice (teachers  $n = 713$ )



Just under half the teachers thought their professional learning over the last 2 to 3 years had provided them with practical help in relation to students with special education needs and building positive relations with parents and whānau, with somewhat lower proportions for engaging Māori and Pasifika students.

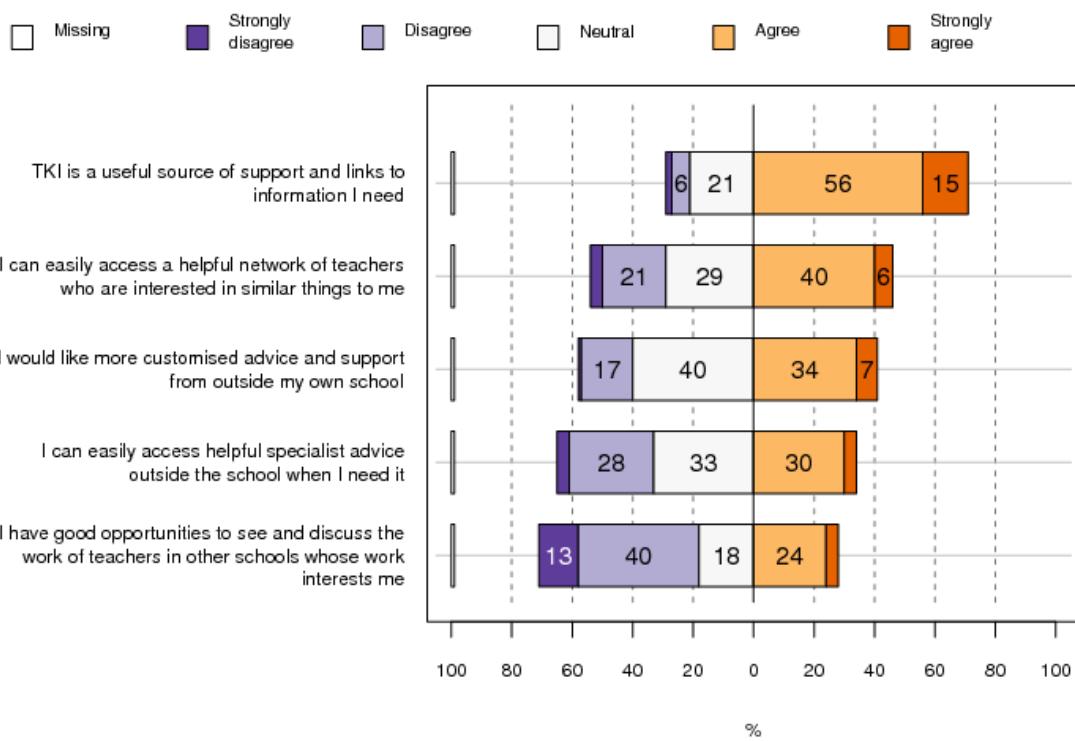
Figure 26 Gains from professional learning in terms of practical help for priority learners (teachers,  $n = 713$ )



A higher proportion of teachers in decile 1–2 schools reported having professional learning that provided practical help with engaging Pasifika students (45 percent agreed or strongly agreed). Teachers at decile 3–4 schools were most likely to indicate they had had professional learning that gave them practical help with engaging Māori students (60 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

Many teachers agreed that the Ministry-funded website Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) is a useful source of support and links to information they need (see Figure 27). Just under half had access to a helpful network of teachers who shared common interests; whether these networks were face-to-face or online is unknown. Professional learning and development for teachers that involved interacting with other teachers or external specialists was not as straightforward to access, with only a minority able to do so easily.

**Figure 27 Access to external support and advice (teachers,  $n = 713$ )**



Ministry-funded professional learning became more targeted from 2012, when general contracts with school support services at the universities were ended and the Ministry asked providers to tender for more specified provision, largely restricted to certain aspects, with a priority given to literacy and mathematics. Principals' answers to questions about this new approach showed some dissatisfaction with the means of accessing Ministry of Education-funded professional learning. However, teachers' responses about the usefulness to them of the learning they received under the new contracts were largely positive, as Table 28 shows.

**Table 28 Teachers' views of the impact of Ministry-funded professional learning in the last 2 years ( $n = 713$ )**

Area of professional learning	Not had this	Little/no impact on my practice	Changed my thinking for the better	Improved my practice	I have been able to sustain changes I have made
	%	%	%	%	%
Literacy	27	5	12	29	14
Mathematics	29	4	11	26	10
Leadership and assessment	43	3	10	14	4
NZC	45	5	10	10	2
Science	56	4	4	4	1
Home–school partnerships	57	3	4	3	1
Aspiring principals	62	2	2	2	1
Gifted and talented	59	3	4	3	0.4

Note: Between 14 and 32 percent of teachers did not respond to each of these items.

## Changes teachers would make in their work

Changes that teachers would make in their work included the perennial desires to reduce paperwork, and to have more time to prepare, to reflect and work together, and to work with individual students.

Table 29 **What primary teachers would change about their work**

<b>Change desired</b>	<b>2007 (n = 912) %</b>	<b>2010 (n = 970) %</b>	<b>2013 (n = 713) %</b>
Reduce administration/paperwork	78	71	74
More time to work with individual students	64	63	60
More non-contact time for preparation, etc.	47	45	58
More time to reflect/plan/share ideas	52	47	55
Better pay	64	58	54
Reduce class size	77	57	52
More support staff	49	57	50
More time to design relevant local learning activities	*	*	48
Reduce the number of initiatives at any one time	52	45	46
More non-contact time to work with other teachers	*	43	44
Reduce assessment workload	48	38	43
More classroom resources	52	52	40
More sharing of knowledge/ideas with teachers from other schools	41	40	39
Rework National Standards	*	*	37
Better provision for students with special education needs	48	38	33
Reduce pace of change	30	32	27
More advice available when assessment results show gaps in student learning	25	18	25
More appreciation of my work by school leaders	43	20	23
Reduce curriculum coverage/size	53	26	23
Better access to useful curriculum resources	*	*	22
Better access to external curriculum advice	*	*	16
More time to work with parents and whānau	*	*	16
More support for me to adapt NZC for students with special education needs	*	*	12
More support for me to learn effective ways of managing behaviour	*	*	11

\* Not asked.

## Career plans

Forty-four percent of teachers responding in 2013 had been teaching for more than 15 years, much the same as in the 2010 National Survey. However, in 2013 there were fewer teachers with

fewer than 2 years' experience (6 percent, compared with 11 percent in 2010, reflecting higher retention rates and therefore fewer opportunities for new teachers).

In 2013, 26 percent of teachers had been teaching at their current school for more than 10 years, much the same as the 24 percent who had done so in the 2010 National Survey. However, there were fewer teachers who were new to their school: 22 percent had been at their current school for 2 years or less in 2013, compared with 33 percent in 2010.

Patterns of teachers' career plans were largely the same in 2013 as they were 3 and 6 years earlier. Over the next 5 years, teachers planned to:

- continue as they are now (35 percent)
- take on a leadership role with management units (28 percent)
- increase their level of responsibility (27 percent)
- change schools (19 percent)
- apply for a study award or sabbatical or fellowship (19 percent)
- begin or complete a postgraduate qualification (17 percent)
- change careers within education (11 percent).

Twenty-seven percent of teachers were planning to leave the profession within 5 years—either to retire (10 percent), leave teaching for personal reasons (9 percent), or change to a career outside education (8 percent). This is slightly fewer teachers than were planning to exit in 2010 (31 percent) and 2007 (37 percent).

Somewhat more teachers signalled an interest in becoming a principal in the future (17 percent in 2013, compared with 14 percent in 2010 and 13 percent in 2007), for similar reasons as indicated in previous surveys; chiefly: wanting to work with teachers as well as students (78 percent of those who said they were interested in becoming a principal); wanting the challenge (77 percent); and being interested in implementing ideas they have (74 percent). Thirty-two percent indicated better salary was also a reason for considering this career move. This increase in interest in becoming a principal could reflect the high proportion of those teaching with more than 10 years' teaching experience in 2013: 63 percent compared with 56 percent in 2010 and 54 percent in 2007.

Teachers who indicated they were not interested in becoming a principal in the future were more clear than in 2010 that they preferred to work with students in the classroom (72 percent of this group in 2013, compared with 52 percent in 2010), that being a principal was too stressful (44 percent, compared with 35 percent in 2010), that they were not interested in school management (35 percent, compared with 26 percent in 2010), and that they would prefer lower management responsibilities only (32 percent, compared with 21 percent in 2010).

## **Summary**

Although teachers responding to the 2013 National Survey showed as much enjoyment of their job as did those in earlier national surveys, there was a slippage in morale. Levels of confidence in managing workload and workload-related stress were not high. Many reported improvements to student achievement and engagement over the last 3 years, but a third thought a high workload prevented them from doing justice to their students.

Primary and intermediate teachers reported useful patterns of sharing inside their school and the ability to gain good feedback on their teaching. However, schools were often struggling to make time for teachers to work together, and to further develop the collaborative professional learning cultures that were becoming evident in 2010 and that are needed for teachers to make the most of in-school expertise and gain the deep understanding required to change practice. Teachers continued to lack opportunities to observe effective colleagues, either in their own school or in other schools. Just under half had access to useful networks of teachers who shared common interests, and only a minority could easily access specialist external advice. Those who had taken part in Ministry-funded professional learning and development generally reported gains for their teaching practice, but this professional learning has been restricted in the past few years. Overall, the support for teachers to share and keep building knowledge of how best to work with learners was still not strong.



# **11. Trustees' perspectives and the work of school boards**

In the NZCER national surveys, two questionnaires are sent via the school to the chair of each primary or intermediate school board in our sample. We ask the chair to give one questionnaire to another board member, preferably one who might have a different view on some issues. Forty-eight percent of those who responded were board chairs. Board chairs tend to be longer serving and to carry more responsibility, so it is likely that the picture here reflects these facts. On the whole, chairs and other trustees responding gave similar responses. Any marked differences in the views of chairs and other trustees are noted. Principals' and parents' views of the key elements in the role of boards, and principals' views of how their school board is working, are also included here.

The two school characteristics we have used in this chapter to see if they have a bearing on experiences and views are school decile and location.

## **Trustee experience and paths to the trustee role**

Primary and intermediate school trustees responding to the survey were most likely to be aged 40 to 49 years (64 percent), with 22 percent aged 30 to 39 years and 13 percent 50 years or more. Fifty-five percent were women, the same as the national figure for 2013. Board chairs were more likely to be male (57 percent compared with 45 percent of respondents).

In terms of ethnicity, 78 percent of the trustees responding identified as Pākehā/European, 13 percent as Māori, 4 percent as Pasifika, 1 percent as Asian, and 5 percent gave another ethnic category. Compared with the national trustee profile for primary and intermediate trustees in 2013, this shows some over-representation of Pākehā/European (72 percent nationally) and under-representation of Māori (17 percent nationally).

Most trustees responding were in paid employment: 54 percent were employees and 31 percent were self-employed. Thirteen percent were not in paid employment. Twenty-four percent of decile 1–2 school trustees were not in paid employment. Most trustees in employment could call on some support for their trustee role from their employment, particularly the self-employed. Forty-four percent of the self-employed trustees were able to use some paid work time for their trustee role (44 percent, compared with 25 percent of employees), or use work equipment (49 percent, compared with 27 percent of employees).

Forty-nine percent of primary and intermediate school trustees had a university degree; only 4 percent had no qualification. Decile 1–2 school trustees were less likely to have a university degree (24 percent). Urban school trustees were more likely to have a university degree (61 percent).

Seventy-eight percent of the trustees who responded to the survey had come onto their school board before the May 2013 elections of boards of trustees: the median length of time served by trustees was 3.2 years, as it was in 2010. Forty-eight percent were chair of their board, and they had generally been longer on their board: a median of 3.8 years, compared with 1.8 years for other trustees. Trustees in provincial locations had a median membership of 2.8 years.

Forty-eight percent of these trustees had some other experience of a governance role, though a little less than was evident in 2010. Twenty percent had served on the board of a non-government organisation that employed staff (as school boards do), and 13 percent on the board of a non-government organisation that did not employ staff. Thirteen percent had experience of business boards (a decrease from 20 percent in 2010). Fourteen percent of the trustees had served on the board of another school (a decrease from 26 percent in 2010). Most of these trustees' experience was in (other) primary schools.

Board chairs were more likely than others to have previous governance experience other than schools, with 19 percent having experience of a business board, compared with 7 percent of other trustees. Trustees at decile 1–2 schools were less likely to have governance experience in business. Rural trustees were most likely to have served on the board of another primary school (15 percent, compared with 7 percent of urban trustees and 4 percent of provincial trustees).

Reasons for taking on the role were similar to those given by trustees in 2010 (see Table 30). Somewhat more were interested in improving student achievement: in 2013, 25 percent now said this was a reason. Only 4 percent stood because they were concerned that school leadership was lacking, down from 9 percent in 2010.

**Table 30 Trustees' reasons for joining their school board**

Reason	2013	2010
	(n = 277)	(n = 252)
%	%	
To contribute to the community	82	86
To help my child/children	66	66
I have useful skills	54	*
To learn how the school operated	47	*
I was asked	44	50
To improve achievement levels	25	18
I wanted to change things	11	14
Not many people were standing	9	*
School leadership was lacking	4	9

\* Not asked.

Decile 1–2 trustees were most likely to say they had stood in order to improve student achievement (46 percent), as they had done in 2010. This was a change from 2007, when the proportion of trustees giving this as a reason had been much the same as the proportion of trustees at other schools.

Rural trustees were more likely to have stood for their board because they were asked to do so (57 percent, compared with 36 percent for urban trustees), and less likely to say they stood because they thought they had useful skills (41 percent, compared with 63 percent of urban trustees).

Although boards have the power to co-opt trustees, only a third of the trustees' boards had done so, and mostly they had co-opted just one person.

Their role gave school trustees satisfaction from contributing to the school (89 percent), better knowledge about education (76 percent), satisfaction from the progress the school has made (63 percent), confidence with school staff (52 percent), and better skills in working with others (29 percent). Board chairs were more likely to express these satisfactions than other trustees.

## **The role of boards**

Much board work occurs in relation to meetings, which are often monthly. Board chairs work more closely with principals. Fifty-four percent of trustees spent between 1 and 2 hours on their board work each week. Board chairs spent more time: only 31 percent carried out their role in 1 to 2 hours a week, compared with 75 percent of other trustees. Trustee time spent on their role had decreased since 2010, the first decrease since 1991.

Table 31 (below) shows how parents (who vote for trustees), trustees and principals answered the question “What do you think are the key elements in the role of the board of trustees?” Strategic direction, supporting school staff or the principal, and representing parents were important elements of the board role for board members, principals and parents. The orientation was towards the school and its community, with few seeing representing the government interest in the school as a key element of board work.

Table 31 Views on the key elements of the board of trustees' role

Key element of board role	Parents (n = 684) %	Trustees (n = 277) %	Principals (n = 180) %
Provide strategic direction for school	68	89	77
Support school staff/principal	55	82	91
Represent parents in the school	53	66	73
Oversee school finances	31	66	67
Scrutinise school performance	24	62	52
Employ school principal	10	47	64
Oversee school principal	15	33	25
Agent of government / representing government interest	8	17	15

Despite more decile 1–2 school trustees taking on the role to improve student achievement, they were less likely than other trustees to see the key elements in their role as employing the principal (24 percent), monitoring school performance (46 percent) or overseeing school finances (46 percent). Decile 9–10 school parents were more likely than other parents to emphasise oversight or employment of the principal (20 and 16 percent, respectively), and oversight of school finances (39 percent). Pasifika parents were more likely than others to emphasise support for school staff or principal (79 percent), representing parents (74 percent) and being an agent of government (27 percent).

Table 32 shows that both principals and trustees were more positive in 2013 than in 2010 or 2007 about the amount of responsibility asked of boards.

Table 32 Principal and Trustee views that the amount of responsibility asked of boards is about right

	2007 %	2010 %	2013 %
Trustees	67	67	77
Principals	41	45	54

Thirty-nine percent of the trustees made a comment about their level of responsibility. The main theme here was that trustee effectiveness depended on their experience and commitment:

The first year is difficult if you are new to the education sector. Unless there are some returning board members it would be difficult for a board to be an effective and independent force.

If the whole board and principal are all pulling their weight then the responsibilities are about right but if anyone is lacking/slacking then more work falls to other people.

Other themes were: the importance of training, support and guidance; the importance of board leadership; and a tension between the voluntary nature of the work and the weight of responsibility in terms of getting things right.

All but 8 percent of the trustees responding would change something about their role—on average they identified three to four things. These desired changes ranged widely, but they are more about support than about workload. While more funding for their school continues to head this list, it is not so pronounced: in 2007, 76 percent of trustees wanted this; in 2010 the figure was 66 percent, and in 2013 it was 49 percent.

**Table 33 Changes trustees would make to their role (*n* = 277)**

Change	Trustees %
Receive more funding for the school (-)	49
Improve knowledge or training (+)	44
Work more with other schools	28
More guidance on use of achievement data to inform board decision making	26
Reduce Ministry of Education expectations of what school can provide for its funding	26
More support from parents (+)	21
More time to focus on strategic issues	20
Reduce compliance costs from education law	20
Clearer distinction between governance and management (-)	18
Support/advice from independent experts (-)	17
More support from Ministry of Education	14
Reduce community expectations of what school can provide for its funding	14
Reduce health and safety compliance costs	13
Reduce workload/paperwork	11
Better information from school staff to inform our decisions	11
More advice or support from NZSTA	8
Better communication among board members	8
Clearer guidelines for disciplinary decisions	7
Lower expectations for community consultation	5
More say over school curriculum	5
Reduce role in disciplinary decisions	3

Notes: (+) = increase of 5 percent or more since 2010; (-) = decrease of 5 percent or more since 2010.

More board chairs identified increased parental support as something they would like to change in relation to their role (28 percent, compared with 14 percent of other trustees). More time to focus on strategic issues was identified by 25 percent of board chairs, compared with 15 percent of other trustees. Urban trustees wanted this more than trustees in other locations (28 percent, compared with 12 percent).

## Support for the trustee role

Only 13 percent of the trustees responding did not have any formal training or support for their role over the past 12 months.

**Table 34 Formal training or support for trustee work over previous 12 months (n = 277)**

Type of training or support	Trustees %
Induction for new trustees	50
Webinar	26
Series of board sessions focused on own school	22
One-off board session focused on own school	20
One-off board session with trustees from other schools in cluster	17
Conference(s)	16
Information from ERO after school went into longitudinal review	12
Ongoing advice/mentoring/coaching from someone outside the school	12
Series of sessions with trustees from other schools within school cluster	9

Board chairs were more likely to attend conferences than other trustees (22 percent, compared with 11 percent of other trustees). Decile 1–2 school trustees were most likely to have had board training sessions focused on their own school (36 percent). Sixty-three percent of trustees who were new to the board (less than 5 months' experience) had had an induction session, and 68 percent had received an induction folder from the school. However, 20 percent had yet to have any formal training for their role.

Most trustees' training is funded by the Ministry of Education or NZSTA (which would have included some Ministry of Education-funded training). Fifty-six percent of board chairs and 43 percent of other trustees had their training over the last 12 months in free NZSTA sessions. Thirty-three percent mentioned free Ministry of Education training. Nineteen percent had used board funds to contract a training provider. Six percent said the Ministry had offered their board a particular training provider, and 1 percent a choice of provider. The reliance of boards on externally funded provision for their training was recognised in the 2013 budget, which increased

funding to NZSTA to provide a national programme and reduced the role of the Ministry of Education itself in directly providing or allocating trustee training.

Their training was important for trustees, both in terms of their overall role and, to a lesser extent, in some specific areas. It also performed a useful role in giving trustees a comparison of practice, providing affirmation for 42 percent. Only 5 percent said their training had not had much impact.

**Table 35 Impact of formal training or support for trustee work in past 12 months (*n* = 277)**

Impact of training	Trustees %
Better understanding of the trustee role	70
Affirmed what we were already doing	42
Better understanding of the board's role as employer	39
Better understanding of how to review school progress	34
Improved our strategic planning	29
Changed some of our board processes	27
Better understanding of the achievement information we get from school staff	25
Improved our annual planning & reporting	25
Better understanding of the financial information we get from school staff	18
Helped us appoint a new principal	9
Helped us with some hard decisions / avoid some costly mistakes	8
Helped us with our consultation processes	8

There is also a wide range of printed and Internet material available to trustees from NZSTA and government agencies, as well as within-school material and advice. On average, trustees were using four to five sources of advice and support. There did not seem to be one ‘bible’ that trustees had used over the last 12 months, and proportions using the targeted material produced by the Ministry of Education, NZSTA or ERO were not high. (It would be interesting to know if use goes up if these are also used in training sessions or made a focus for discussion in board meetings). Despite more material being available on the Internet, its use—whether from NZSTA or the Ministry of Education—has remained stable since 2007.

Table 36 Other sources of advice or support over previous 12 months ( $n = 277$ )

Source	Trustees %
STANews	63
Principal / school staff	59
School board induction folder	47
Other trustees on the board	45
<i>Effective Governance</i> (MoE)	39
<i>Trusteeship – A Guide for School Trustees</i> (NZSTA)	33
<i>How Boards Work</i> (MoE)	29
Internet material from MoE	29
Internet material from NZSTA	28
NZSTA helpdesk	24
<i>School Trustees – Helping You Ask the Right Questions</i> (ERO)	21
Discussions with ERO	21
Material from ERO website	15
Discussions with NZSTA	14
Trustees in other schools	13
<i>Supporting Education Success as Māori</i> (MoE)	13
NZSTA Industrial Advisory Service	9
<i>Strengthening Targets</i> (MoE)	7
<i>Building Inclusive Schools</i> (MoE)	4
<i>Supporting Pasifika Success</i> (MoE)	4
<i>Recruiting &amp; Managing School Staff</i> (MoE)	1

Board chairs were more likely to use NZSTA services than other trustees in order to: have contact with the NZSTA helpdesk (34 percent, compared with 15 percent of other trustees), have discussions with NZSTA (19 percent, compared with 11 percent of other trustees), use the Industrial Advisory Service (13 percent, compared with 6 percent), and use NZSTA Internet material (38 percent, compared with 19 percent).

Decile 9–10 school trustees were most likely to have contact with the NZSTA helpdesk (32 percent, decreasing to 18 percent of decile 1–2 school trustees) and have discussions with NZSTA (25 percent, decreasing to 6 percent of decile 1–2 school trustees). Decile 1–2 school trustees were less likely to use Internet material from the Ministry of Education (12 percent), the ERO publication (9 percent) or the NZSTA guide on trusteeship (21 percent). Rural trustees were less likely to have received advice or support from trustees in other schools (6 percent).

In addition, 63 percent of trustees had access to records/archives of previous board papers, 56 percent could access school-related information online, and 29 percent could use a library of relevant material.

The 3-yearly elections for boards took place in May 2013. We asked principals whether their school had held elections then (none were required if the number of candidates was no more than the minimal number of four to five positions parents vote for). Sixty-eight percent of the principals said their school had held an election, with a median turnout of 40 percent of parents for the 91 schools for which we have information. Decile 1–2 schools were less likely to have held an election (48 percent), and their median turnout was much lower, at 10 percent.

We asked how many trustees were new to their board since the May elections to see what continuity there would be in board knowledge. There is in fact good continuity for half: 42 percent of the trustees' boards had changed only one or two of their members, and 8 percent of their boards had stayed the same. Twenty-seven percent of the trustees' boards had changed three members, 19 percent had changed four to five members, and in 2 percent of cases all the board had changed. Thus continuity was an issue in the boards of around 20 percent of the trustees responding.

The median number of trustees on school boards was seven overall. In rural areas it was six. Taken with the higher proportion of rural trustees who had stood for their board because they had been asked to, this suggests that it is more of a challenge for rural schools to find board members.

Individual boards are unlikely to have all the specific skills and expertise related to the board role. Table 37 shows that trustees were most likely to think their board had finance and property skills, followed by staff employment skills. However, most trustees were confident that their board could undertake its role—judging by the low proportion of those who said their board needs external advice and support, also shown in this table. Legal advice is mentioned by a fifth.

Table 37 **Board capacity and need for external advice and support (*n* = 277)**

Skill & experience area	Board has this %	Board needs external support %
Finance	82	12
Property	78	14
Staff employment	72	9
Strategic planning	67	11
Governance	66	8
Understanding student achievement data	65	12
Education	64	3
Fundraising	54	7
ICT	44	13
Public relations	43	7
Community consultation	41	13
Links with local iwi	40	14
Understanding student engagement data	37	13
Legal	30	20
E-learning	27	12
Industrial relations	23	9
Pasifika networks	13	9
Understanding NZC	*	13
Understanding National Standards	*	12
Student behaviour management	*	5

\* Not asked.

Board chairs were more likely than other trustees to identify the need for external legal support (27 percent, compared with 13 percent), and ICT (18 percent, compared with 9 percent). Decile 1–2 school trustees were more likely to identify community consultation and Pasifika networks as areas of expertise within their board ranks, and a little less likely to identify property management or staff employment. Urban trustees were more likely to say their board had legal skills (37 percent); rural trustees' schools were less likely to have industrial relations skills (13 percent).

When asked about advice and support from the Ministry of Education, however, most trustees said their board had this, or wanted it, as Table 38 shows. Between 15 and 23 percent of the trustees did not answer each item, indicating that some were unsure or neutral about particular support.

**Table 38 Trustees' views on roles of their local/regional Ministry of Education office (*n* = 277)**

Ministry of Education role	Want this %	Do not want this %	Happens now, done well %	Happens now, needs improvement %	Happens now, don't want it %
Consultation on any local/regional changes that could affect our school	54	1	16	13	1
Discussion with board on major national changes	51	5	12	16	1
Support for schools to work together professionally	44	5	19	13	1
Allocation of discretionary funds	40	9	14	12	1
Advice on professional experts to help with principal performance review	36	10	29	8	2
Support if we encounter a problem	36	3	29	16	1
Advice if we encounter a problem	35	2	30	16	1
Support for board in appointing principal	34	20	16	5	2
Advice on professional experts to help with principal appointment	33	18	19	7	2
Advice to board on appointing principal	31	22	16	5	2
Professional discussions on school's annual report and targets that feed into school discussion of strategies related to student achievement	31	17	18	14	1
Support with property work	26	9	20	29	1
Advice on property work	22	11	22	30	1

Decile 1–2 school trustees were most likely to say that they had good professional discussions with the Ministry of Education on their school's annual report and targets (33 percent, compared with 18 percent overall). Decile 7–10 school trustees were most likely to say the same thing about getting advice or support to appoint a principal. Decile 9–10 school trustees, who were most likely to identify school property as a major challenge for their school (61 percent, compared with 43

percent overall) were most likely to say that their current Ministry of Education advice on and support with property work needed improvement (39 percent each, compared with 30 and 29 percent, respectively).

We also asked trustees what role they thought their board should play if the closest Ministry of Education offices had more responsibility in terms of allocating resources for local areas. Thirty-six percent of trustees thought that their board should be part of an advisory group for the local area as a whole, and 35 percent thought it should be part of a decision-making group for the area. A sizeable minority did not seem to see their school as part of a national system, and would either like their board to act as advocates for their own school only (29 percent, including some who also ticked that they would want their board to play a part on advisory or decision-making groups for the area as a whole), or play no role beyond their own school (15 percent).

## The work of boards

We asked trustees to rank 11 different board tasks in terms of the overall amount of time their board had spent on them in 2013. Overall, monitoring school performance, financial management and property/maintenance, followed by strategic planning, were ranked highest. These same tasks were also the ones to take most board time in 2010.

Decile 1–2 school trustees were less likely to identify property and financial management as tasks that took the most time (in the top three ranks). Rural school trustees were less likely to identify property management, and provincial trustees were less likely to identify strategic planning or monitoring school progress.

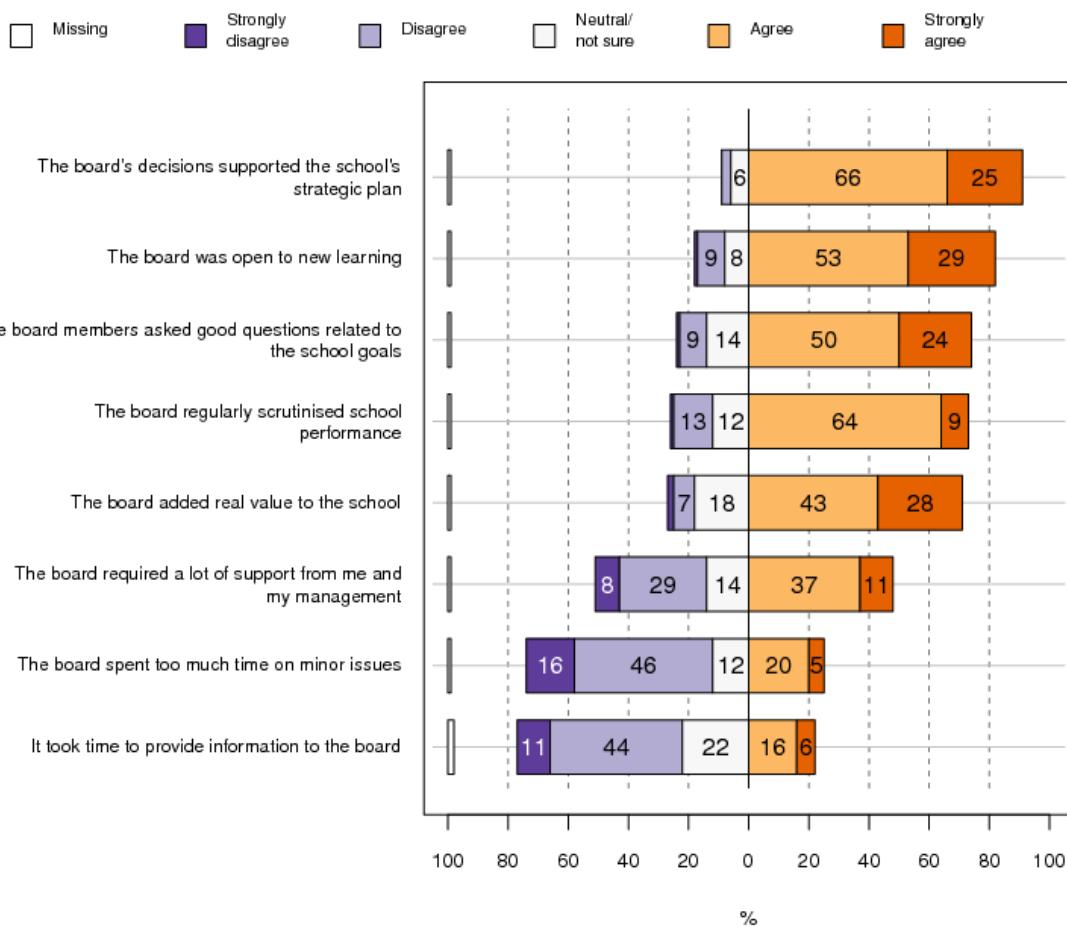
Trustees were generally positive about how well their board was doing. Twenty-six percent thought their board was on top of its task, an increase from the 16 percent who thought this in 2010; 62 percent thought that it was making steady progress, and only 9 percent thought that their board was merely coping; one trustee said their board was struggling. This is much the same picture as in 2010. Trustees from provincial schools were less likely to think their board was on top of its task (12 percent).

Principals were asked the same question about the board before the May 2013 election. Their views of board performance were also more positive than in previous years: only 13 percent described their board as (merely) coping, and only two saw the board as struggling, compared with 14 percent who saw their board coping and 6 percent who saw it struggling in 2010, and 20 percent who saw their board coping and 4 percent who saw it struggling in 2007. In 2013 decile 1–2 school principals were more likely to see their boards as coping (29 percent).

We also asked principals about 18 different aspects of the work of the previous board of trustees at their school, before the May 2013 elections, to gain their perspective as the schools' professional leaders. Figure 28 shows that principals were generally positive about the boards they had worked with and saw them as making a useful contribution to the school. At the same

time, 48 percent of the principals thought that their school board required a lot of support from the school's management team (up from 38 percent in 2010). Twenty-five percent thought their board spent too much time on minor issues.

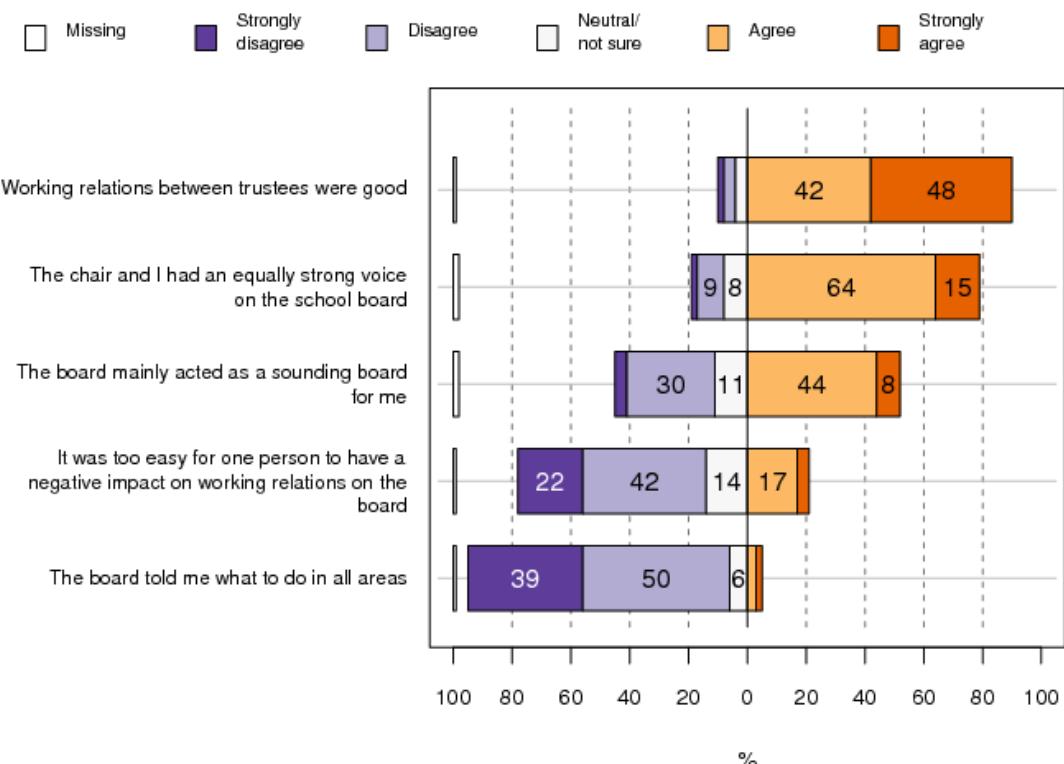
**Figure 28 Principals' views of the board contribution to the school and the support needed  
(n = 180)**



Decile 1–2 school principals were less likely to see their board as adding real value to the school: 52 percent thought they did, compared with 72 percent overall.

Most principals reported good working relations among their school's trustees and felt that they and the board chair had equally strong voices on the school board. Just over half thought that their board acted mainly as a sounding board for the principal.

Figure 29 Working relations: principals' views of their boards ( $n = 180$ )



There are some interesting changes in principals' views between 2010 and 2013 that may indicate that principals have been paying closer attention to how they work with boards and support them, since the changes evident among trustees indicate more confidence in their role in 2013 than in 2010. In 2013, 52 percent of principals said that their board mainly acted as a sounding board for them; in 2010, 38 percent said so. In 2013, 79 percent of principals thought that they and the school chair had an equally strong voice on the board; in 2010, 59 percent thought so.

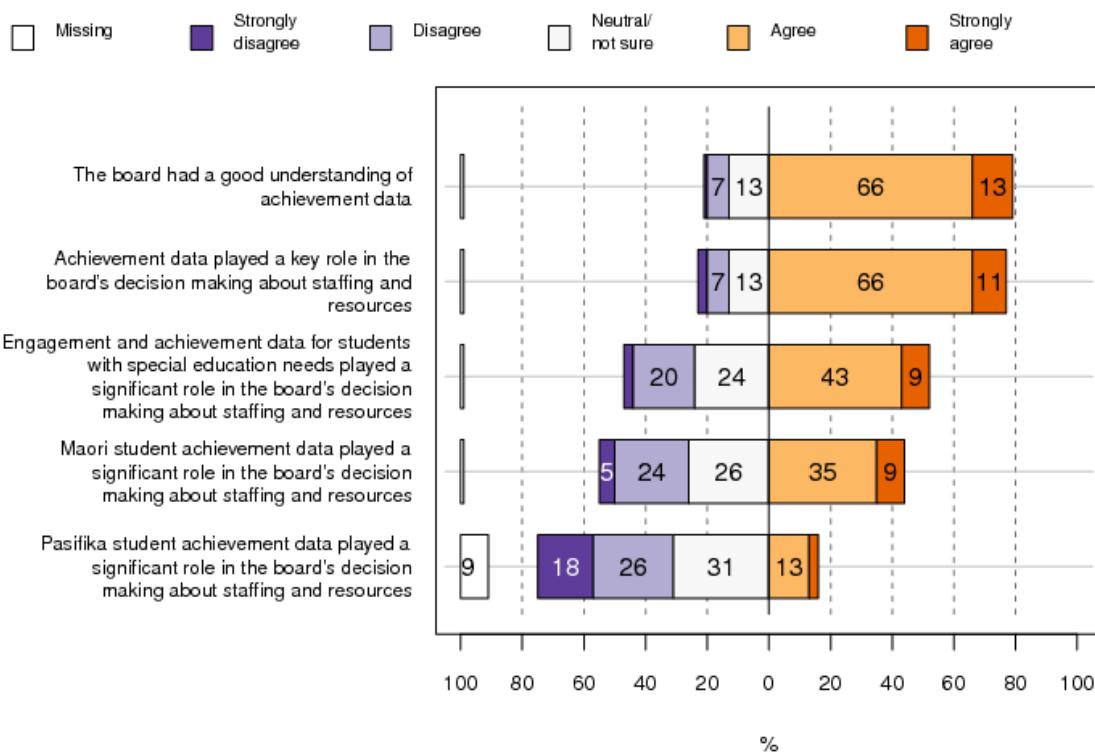
There has also been a decrease in the proportion of principals reporting major problems in their relationship with a board, whether their current school or at a previous school, from 21 percent of principals in 2010 to 12 percent in 2013. The incidence of minor problems in the board-principal relationship has increased somewhat, with 52 percent reporting these at their current school in 2013 compared with 44 percent in 2010.

Decile 1–4 school principals were less likely to have encountered a problem in their relationship with a school board (60 percent had not, compared with 37 percent of principals in decile 9–10 schools).

Student achievement data have been strongly emphasised over the past few years as pivotal in board decision-making; for example, in its allocation of resources. As can be seen in Figure 30, 79 percent of principals thought their boards had a good understanding of achievement data (up from 67 percent in 2010), and 77 percent that it played a key role in their decision-making. Asked about three of the Government's current priority learner groups, it was more likely that achievement

data about students with special education needs and Māori students would play a significant role in board decisions than data about Pasifika students; this is likely to reflect differences in the composition of school rolls. Seventy-one percent of principals of decile 1–2 schools, which have higher proportions of Māori students, reported Māori student achievement data being used significantly in board decisions, decreasing to 30 percent of principals in decile 9–10 schools.

**Figure 30 The role of student achievement data in board decision making: principals' views (*n* = 180)**



Twenty-nine percent of the trustees said their board regularly reviewed its own performance, and the boards of 40 percent of trustees said they did so sometimes, a similar picture to 2010. Trustees at decile 1–2 schools were less likely to report a board's review of its own performance (52 percent, compared with 69 percent overall). Just over half the new trustees who had been at the school for 5 months or less did not know if their board reviewed its own performance, nor did 27 percent of those who had served between 6 months and 3 years on their board.

## Parents and community input into board work

Only 3 percent of trustees had no or little direct contact with parents at the school. A third of the trustees had three or four different kinds of contact, more often with individuals (63 percent did so informally with friends; 40 percent with parents they did not know, at school functions) than with groups. Thirty-nine percent of the trustees helped or worked at the school as well, more so in rural schools (54 percent). Board chairs had more contact than other trustees. Comparisons with 2010

responses show fewer trustees were contacting individual parents to seek their views—possibly as it becomes easier for schools to survey parents. Interestingly, only 15 percent of trustees had discussed student achievement in the school with parents, and 7 percent mentioned board discussions with parents about the school's progress on its annual targets.

Parents came to board meetings at 30 percent of the trustees' schools. Fifty-one percent said parents had raised some aspect of the school with the board. Trustees at decile 1–4 schools were less likely to say that parents had raised issues with their board (34 percent).

Student achievement or progress on annual targets does not feature prominently in the issues parents raised, being raised at 10 percent and 1 percent of the trustees' schools, respectively. Table 39 shows the main issues raised, and the increase since 2010 for most of these.

**Table 39 Main issues raised by parents with their school board**

Issue	2013 trustees (n = 277) %	2010 trustees (n = 252) %
Discipline / student behaviour / bullying	32	21
Grounds/maintenance	31	11
Dissatisfaction with a staff member	26	15
School zone / enrolment scheme	25	7
Funding, including fundraising or spending	24	15
Transport	19	9
School future	17	13
Health and safety	16	12
National Standards	15	*
Provision for students with special education needs	14	9
Class sizes	13	6

\* Not asked

School zoning, funding and the level of school donations or fees were most likely to be raised by parents in decile 9–10 schools (41 percent, 39 percent and 23 percent, respectively); these are the schools with the highest levels of donations asked of parents and the ones most likely to have zones. Trustees at these schools were also more likely to attend meetings of their school's Parent Teacher Association, which usually manages school fundraising activities. Parents at decile 9–10 schools were also more likely to raise issues relating to e-learning (21 percent) or curriculum (23 percent).

Rural school trustees were most likely to mention transport (40 percent) and least likely to mention grounds or maintenance (13 percent) as issues raised by parents. Provincial school trustees were more likely to have parents raising issues in relation to provision for students with special education needs (33 percent).

Eighty-two percent of the trustees' boards had consulted their community in the past 12 months; a further 8 percent were unsure if their board had done this. Written questionnaires were the main way that boards consulted its community (73 percent); 25 percent had used email to survey parents. Only 8 percent used phone surveys. Meetings were also common: 50 percent had held a public meeting at the school, 31 percent had invited parents to board meetings, 26 percent had a hui with whānau, 11 percent had public meetings or workshops in their community, and some had met specific groups of parents (10 percent).

We asked trustees to give an overall percentage of the school's parents who took part in their board's community consultation: the median was 18 percent, with 23 percent of schools managing to attract at least half their parents. This was more likely to occur in rural trustees' schools (41 percent).

Trustees were reasonably positive that the methods their board used had been successful, with 43 percent saying they were generally successful and 32 percent successful for some issues.

Decile 9–10 school trustees' boards were most likely to survey their parents by email (39 percent, compared with 4 percent of decile 1–2 school trustees). Decile 1–2 school trustees were most likely to hold hui with whānau (44 percent), but less likely to hold public meetings at the school (35 percent). Urban trustees were most likely to mention email surveys (36 percent, compared with 9 percent of rural trustees) and hui with whānau (34 percent, compared with 8 percent of rural trustees).

Trustees' boards asked for parent input on three topics on average. The main issues reflected board responsibilities covered by education regulations. They were:

- strategic planning / school charter / vision (43 percent)
- curriculum (36 percent)
- reporting to parents (35 percent)
- provision for Māori students (30 percent)
- student achievement (28 percent)
- school culture or climate (24 percent)
- student health and wellbeing (24 percent)
- ways of working with the parent/whānau community (20 percent).

Student health and wellbeing was most likely to be a topic of parent consultation in decile 1–2 trustees' schools (39 percent of those who had consulted). Provision for Pasifika students was more likely in decile 1–4 schools (23 percent of those who had consulted, compared with 7 percent of those who had consulted in decile 5–10 schools).

Consultation on student health and wellbeing, the school culture and incorporation of te reo Māori were more likely to occur in provincial schools than in urban or rural schools (38 percent, 35 percent and 25 percent, respectively).

## Board achievements

Most of the trustees could identify some main achievements of their board over the last year. On the whole, the pattern shown in Table 40 is similar to those identified in 2010, though fewer trustees identified improvement of the school grounds or buildings, or work embedding *NZC*, and more identified planning for the future, a good ERO report, and improvements in student attendance and in Pasifika students' achievement. It is interesting that the proportions did not increase in relation to some of the main policy emphases in the last 3 years, such as the increased attention paid to student achievement and Māori student achievement. This may suggest the need for greater support for schools in these areas.

Table 40 Main achievements of trustees' boards over past year ( $n = 277$ )

Achievement	Trustees %
Good financial management	70
Quality of teaching stayed high or improved	64
Improvements in student achievement	61
Planning for the future	57
Kept good staff	55
Made progress on our school targets	51
Improvement of grounds/buildings	49
Good ERO report	46
Greater focus on student achievement	43
More use of e-learning	42
Continued to embed the New Zealand Curriculum	37
Improvements in Māori students' achievement	29
Improved provision for students with special education needs	27
Community/parent involvement increased	25
Improvements in student behaviour	21
Appointment of new principal	16
Improvements in student attendance	13
Improvements in Pasifika students' achievement	12

Decile 1–2 school trustees were most likely to identify improved student attendance (36 percent), improved Pasifika student achievement (30 percent) and provision for students with special education needs (39 percent); they were least likely to say the quality of teaching had stayed high or improved (46 percent), or that they had continued to embed *NZC* (24 percent). Improvements in Māori student achievement were less noted by trustees at decile 9–10 schools (20 percent, compared with 43 percent in decile 5–6 schools and 36 percent in decile 1–2 schools).

Provincial trustees were less likely to identify that the quality of teaching had stayed high or improved (48 percent), or that they had made more use of e-learning (26 percent).

## Summary

Providing strategic direction for the school continued to be the key element of the role of boards identified by trustees, principals and parents. Supporting school staff and the principal and representing parents were also important. Employment or oversight of principals was less important, and even less important was acting as an agent of government. Strategic direction was not, however, the main thing that boards spent their time on: financial management and property and its maintenance go alongside monitoring school performance and strategic planning in the four top tasks that took board time.

Seventy-seven percent of primary and intermediate school trustees thought that the amount of responsibility asked of boards was about right, as did 54 percent of principals—somewhat higher proportions than in 2010. At the same time, 43 percent of trustees would like to improve their knowledge or training to undertake the role, higher than in 2010. This was not because of a lack of formal training or support *per se*—only 15 percent had had no formal training or support—but most of this seemed to be in the form of single sessions. Most of the training was Ministry of Education or NZSTA funded. Trustees were also using internal school knowledge from the staff, other trustees and school board induction folders. Of the guidance currently available from the Ministry of Education or ERO, no one item stood out: there appears to be no single ‘bible’ used by trustees.

Most trustees thought their board needed advice and support from the Ministry of Education if they did not have it, including advice on experts to help with principal appointments and the school’s annual report and targets.

Continuity in school boards across the triennial elections is probably greater than some have thought: it was only an issue for 21 percent of the trustees, whose boards lost at least four of their previous members in the May 2013 elections.

Forty-six percent of trustees had some experience of other governance roles, a little less than in 2010. These included non-government organisations, other schools and business boards.

Principals and trustees were generally positive about how their board was doing, somewhat more so than in 2010. Decile 1–2 school principals were the most likely to think their board was simply coping (29 percent, compared with 13 percent of principals overall). Although 72 percent of principals saw their boards as making a useful contribution to the school, 46 percent thought their school board required a lot of support from the school’s management team, up from 38 percent in 2010. Just over half the principals thought that their school board acted mainly as a sounding board for the principal.

Almost all trustees had direct contact with parents at the school, and 39 percent helped or worked at their school. Fifty-one percent of trustees said parents had raised an issue with their school board; there appears to be an increase in this, with, for example, 32 percent of the trustees reporting that parents raised issues around student behaviour or bullying, compared with 21 percent in 2010, and 31 percent of trustees reporting parents raising issues to do with school grounds or maintenance, an increase from 11 percent in 2010. Student achievement or progress on annual targets was not among the main issues raised by parents (this happened for 10 percent and 1 percent of trustees, respectively).

Most trustees reported that their school board had consulted its community in the past 12 months, most frequently through written questionnaires. Although trustees did not see themselves primarily as agents of government, their consultation of parents did reflect board legal responsibilities and was on issues such as strategic planning and the school charter, curriculum, provision for Māori students, and student achievement.

## 12. Parent perspectives

Most of the parents who filled in the questionnaires were women (86 percent). Sixty-six percent ( $n = 449$ ) of the parents were Pākehā/European, 16 percent ( $n = 109$ ) were Māori, 5 percent were Pasifika ( $n = 34$ ) and 5 percent were Asian ( $n = 34$ ); 7 percent came from other ethnic backgrounds ( $n = 47$ ), or categorised themselves as New Zealanders (2 percent).<sup>20</sup> Among Asian parents, a higher proportion of males filled in the questionnaire (26 percent compared with 14 percent overall), as also happened among those who came from ‘other’ ethnic backgrounds (23 percent). Asian parents had the highest qualification levels among responding parents: 41 percent had a bachelor’s degree (17 percent overall), and 26 percent a postgraduate degree or diploma (16 percent overall). Overall, 10 percent of parents responding had no educational qualification, including 24 percent of Māori parents and 18 percent of Pasifika parents.

Fifty-five percent of the parents had only one child at the school we asked them about, 37 percent had two children there, 7 percent had three children, and 1 percent had four or five children. We asked parents to answer questions about their choice of school in relation to their *youngest* child at this school, and also about that child’s school experiences. This gave us coverage of all year levels, but with proportionately fewer at higher year levels.

In this chapter we have analysed responses by parent ethnicity and school decile, grouping school deciles into three groups: 1–2, 3–8 and 9–10. There is some overlap of these two key characteristics: for example, 51 percent of Māori parents responding had children at decile 1–2 schools, as did 59 percent of Pasifika parents, and 23 percent of those categorised as ‘other’, but only 12 percent of Asian parents and 7 percent of Pākehā/European parents responding to the survey had children at decile 1–2 schools.

### School choice

Very few families were unable to access the school they first chose for their child. Only 6 percent of parents said their child was attending a school that was not their family’s first choice. However, 12 percent of Pasifika parents and 11 percent of Māori parents said that their current school was

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<sup>20</sup> These counts of ethnicity have used the ‘prioritised’ ethnicity approach used by the Ministry of Education, which assigns each person one ethnic category, though they may have given more. In this approach, the 53 people who ticked both Māori and Pākehā options and the four people who ticked both Māori and Pasifika options were assigned to the Māori category; the four Pasifika people who also ticked the Pākehā or ‘other’ options were assigned to the Pasifika category; the three Asian people who also ticked the Pākehā or ‘other’ ethnic categories were assigned to the Asian category; and the two people in the ‘other’ category who also ticked Pasifika and Pākehā categories were assigned to the Pasifika category.

not their first choice. Thirteen percent of those whose child went to a decile 1–2 school were not at the school of their first choice. Previous national surveys show a similar picture since 2003, indicating that the degree of choice in the New Zealand state and state-integrated system is sufficient for the majority of families with primary-aged children. The main reasons given for not being able to access the school of first choice were the school enrolment zone, followed by cost and transport; a few said their child had not wanted to attend the school, or the school that had been the first choice was reluctant to cater for their child's special education needs.

The closest primary or intermediate was the school of first choice for 66 percent of parents; 26 percent chose a school that was not their closest school. Parents whose children were at decile 1–2 schools were more likely to be at their closest school.

Personal knowledge and contacts, existing relationships and proximity were the main influences on family choice of school. Others' attendance played a part: an older sibling (53 percent), other children known to the family (29 percent), the child's friends (22 percent) or family members (17 percent). Living in the school zone had played a part in the choice for 47 percent, as had having the school within walking distance (41 percent). Other parents' opinions played a part for 29 percent, as did early childhood education teachers' views (6 percent). Twenty-three percent of the parents had visited the school or attended a school open day; 8 percent had looked at the school website. Twelve percent were attracted by the school's special character. Interestingly, parents' choice of school was less likely to be influenced by the formal measures of school accountability, such as ERO reviews (15 percent looked at the school's most recent ERO review, somewhat lower than the 26 percent in both 2010 and 2007), or the school's annual report (2 percent used these, much the same as in 2010, though they now include more information about school performance and goals). Five percent mentioned National Standards results.

Sixteen percent of the parents described other influences on their choice: about a fifth of these (3 percent of the total responses) mentioned the good reputation of the school, the draw card of the principal or a particular teacher, or the school's curriculum or a particular programme it offered.

Though the proportions were still low, Pasifika parents were more likely to include the ERO review of the school (24 percent), National Standards results (18 percent), the school website (15 percent), the school annual report (15 percent), or a newspaper story about the school (9 percent) as things that influenced their school choice. They and Māori parents were also more likely to mention being influenced by family members attending the school (32 percent and 25 percent, respectively, compared with 17 percent for all parents).

Parents whose child went to a decile 1–2 school were less likely to refer to ERO reviews of the school (10 percent, compared with 18 percent of parents at decile 9–10 schools), or the opinions of other parents (18 percent). The attraction of a school's special character was associated with school decile: this was mentioned by 18 percent of parents whose child went to a decile 9–10 school, but only 5 percent of those whose child went to a decile 1–2 school. The latter were most likely to mention family members attending the school (24 percent, compared with 8 percent of

parents whose child attended a decile 9–10 school), and least likely to mention visiting the school (14 percent) as factors that influenced their school choice.

## Parents' views of their child's school experiences

We asked parents what they felt about 20 aspects of their child's experience at the school, and their responses were largely positive. Eighty-nine percent were generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling (6 percent were neutral or unsure, and 3 percent were not happy with the quality). These are much the same proportions as in previous rounds of the NZCER National Survey.

Parents were most positive about:

- recommending their child's school to other parents (56 percent strongly agreed they would do this)
- feeling comfortable talking with their child's teachers (59 percent strongly agreed that they felt this)
- feeling welcome in the school (56 percent strongly agreed this was their experience)
- their child feeling they belong in the school, and feeling safe there (52 percent strongly agreed this was the case)
- being generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling (51 percent strongly agreed this was the case).

Few parents recorded negative views. They were most likely to express neutral views or uncertainty as to whether:

- their child's teachers made an effort to understand things about the family and culture that were different from the teachers' own (30 percent)
- the cultural identity of their child was recognised and respected (28 percent)
- their child's teachers had high expectations for him or her (20 percent)
- the school would help their child if they had difficulty learning (18 percent)
- schoolwork had the right challenge for their child, their child was helped to set realistic learning goals, and got clear feedback about their work (14–15 percent each).

Figures 31 to 33 provide further details of parents' perspectives on their child's school experience.

Figure 31 Parents' views of their child's sense of belonging and safety at the school ( $n = 684$ )

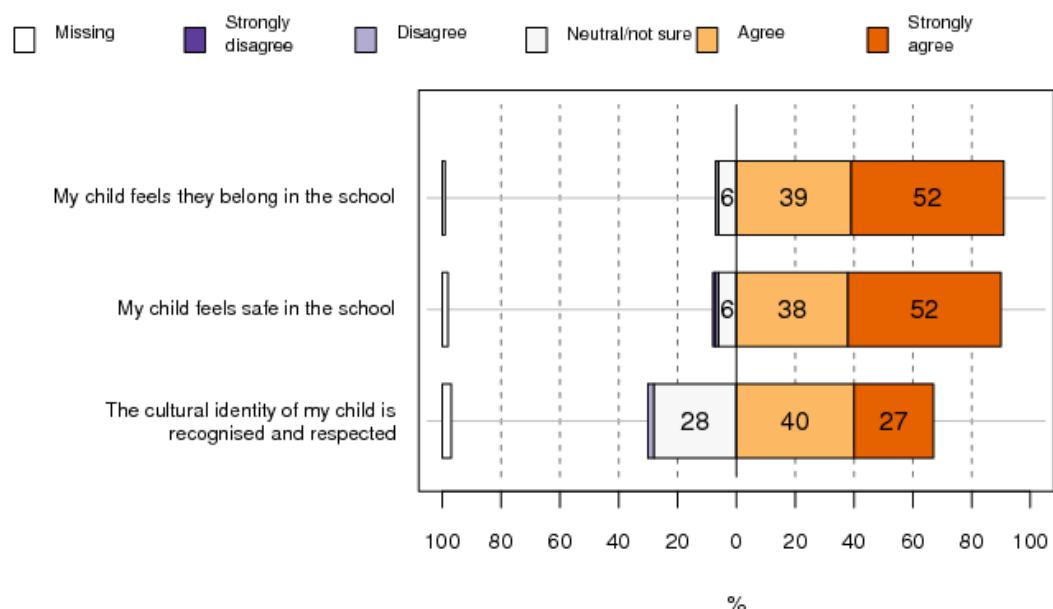


Figure 32 Parents' views of their child's teachers (*n* = 684)

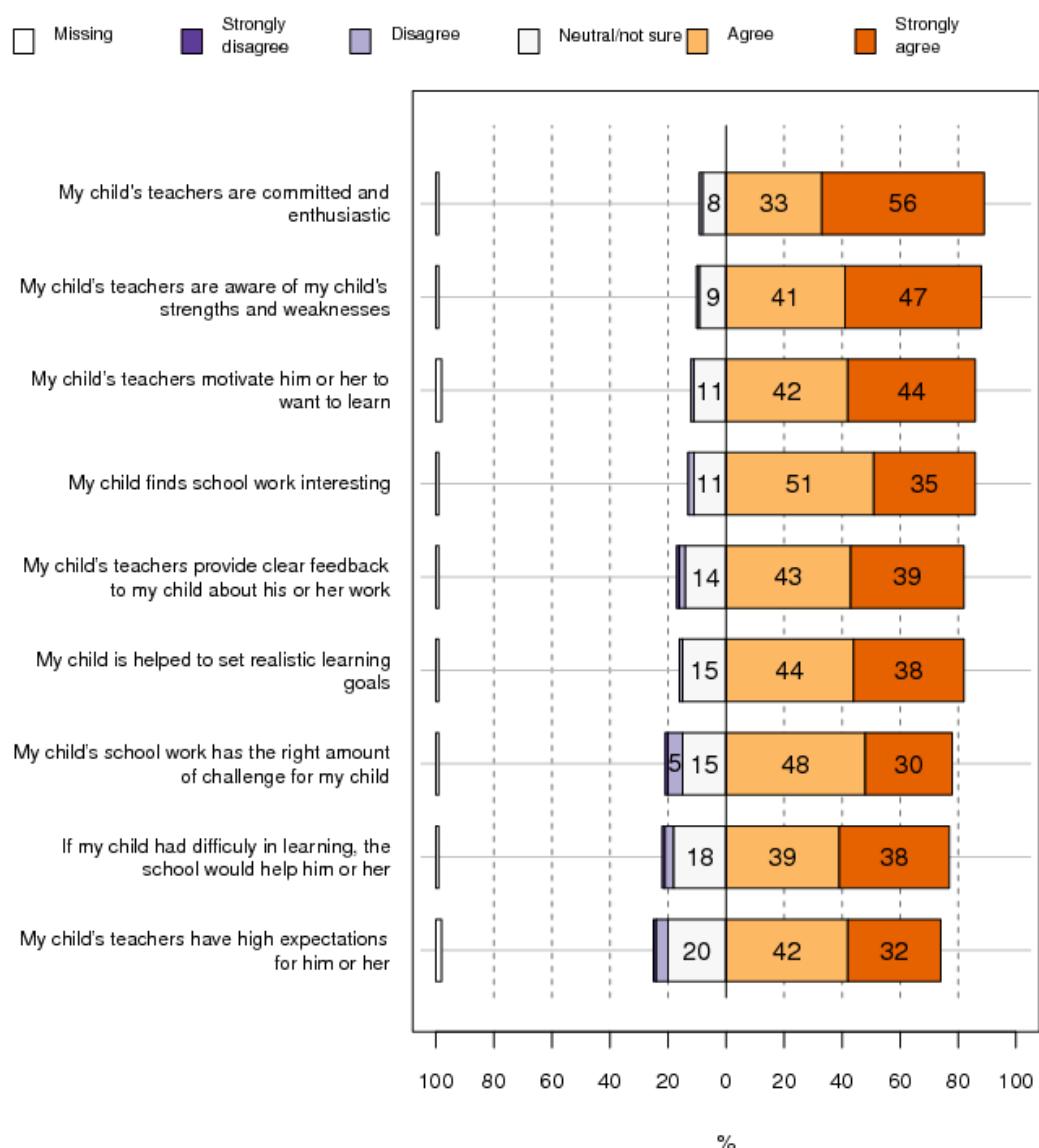
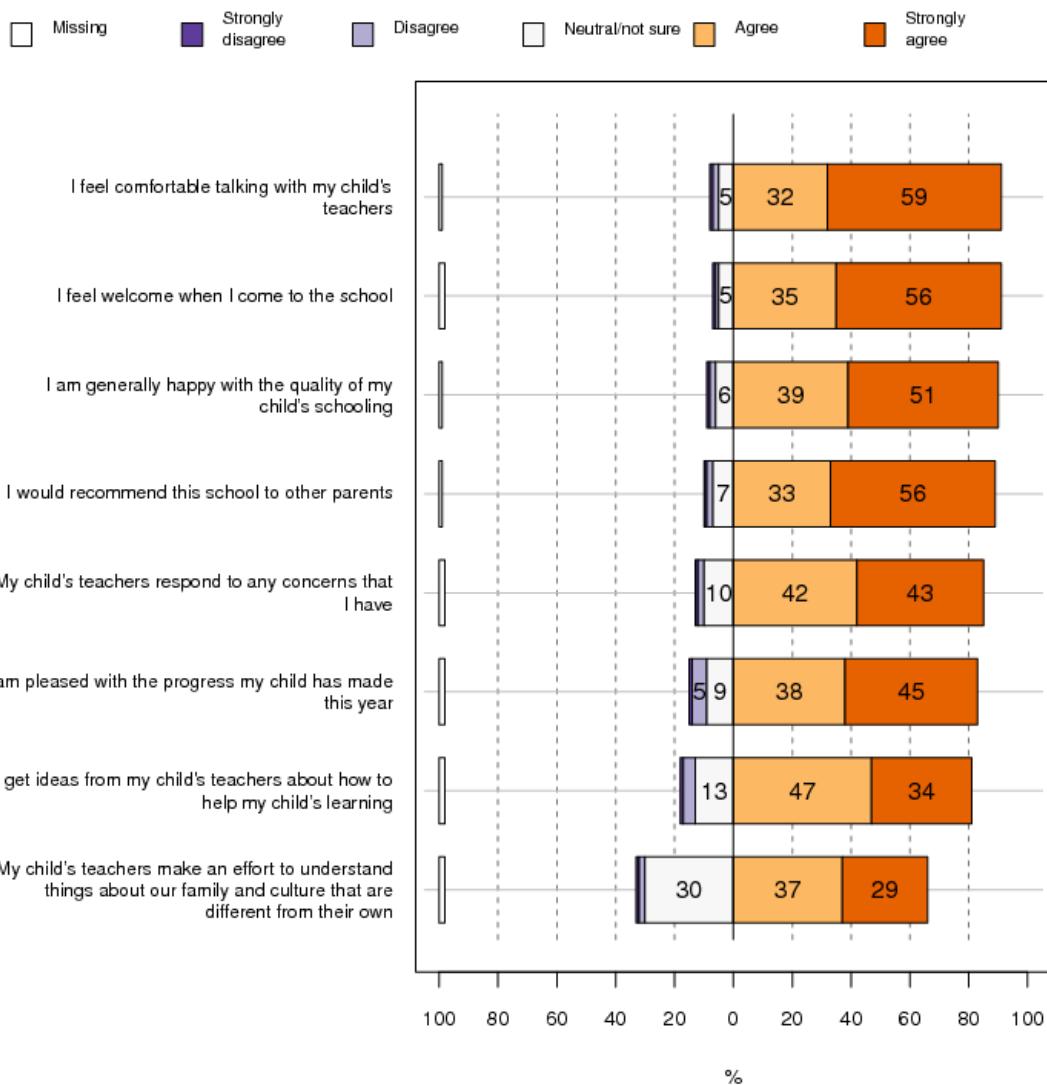


Figure 33 Parents' views of their child's school and progress ( $n = 684$ )



There were some differences in parents' views related to their ethnicity that indicate trends that could be statistically significant with larger numbers. Asian parents and those of 'other' ethnicity were less likely to strongly agree they were pleased with their child's progress, or that their child's teacher had high expectations for the child. However, these two groups were just as likely as others to think that if their child was struggling with schoolwork the school would help, to feel comfortable talking with their child's teacher, and to feel that their child's cultural identity was respected.

Parents of children at decile 1–2 schools were the most positive about their child's experience: they were more likely to strongly agree with quite a few of the items we asked about. For example, 44 percent of parents at decile 1–2 schools strongly agreed that the school's teachers had high expectations for their child, compared with 31 percent of decile 3–8 school parents and 25 percent of decile 9–10 school parents. Fifty-eight percent of decile 1–2 school parents strongly

agreed they were pleased with their child's progress, compared with 31 percent of decile 3–8 school parents and 31 percent of decile 9–10 school parents, and less likely to disagree or have a neutral view of items such as their child being helped to set realistic learning goals, their child's teachers having high expectations for them, or getting good ideas from the teacher about how to help their child.

Parents of children at decile 9–10 schools were least likely to be pleased with their child's progress (23 percent disagreed or gave a neutral response, compared with 10 percent of parents whose child was at a decile 1–2 school, and 13 percent of those whose child was at a decile 3–8 school). They were also more likely to disagree or give a neutral response to whether the school would help their child if they were struggling (32 percent, compared with 14 percent of parents whose child was at a decile 1–2 school, and 21 percent of parents whose child was at a decile 3–8 school). Yet they were just as likely as other parents to be happy with the overall quality of their child's schooling and to recommend their child's school to other parents.

Parents of Year 7–8 students were less positive than parents of younger students about most of the aspects of their child's experience that we asked about, particularly to do with whether their child found schoolwork interesting (15 percent strongly agreed that they did, compared with 41 percent of parents of Year 0–1 students and 28 percent of Year 5–6 students). This is consistent with studies of student engagement that find that overall levels decline as students grow older.<sup>21</sup> Yet views did not differ by year level of students when it came to their child's teachers having high expectations for them, giving them clear feedback, and their child feeling safe at school and that they belonged at the school.

On the whole, parents' perspectives in 2013 were much the same as they were in 2010 for the 14 items we asked in both years. There were small increases for some items. For example, in 2013 more parents agreed or strongly agreed that:

- their child found school work interesting (85 percent in 2013; 77 percent in 2010)
- their child's school work had the right amount of challenge for their child (78 percent in 2013; 67 percent in 2010)
- they got good ideas from teachers about how to help their child's learning (81 percent in 2013; 70 percent in 2010)
- they would recommend the school to other parents (89 percent in 2013; 83 percent in 2010).

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, C. Wylie & E. Hodgen (2011) Trajectories and patterns of student engagement: Evidence from a longitudinal study. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 585–600). New York, NY: Springer.

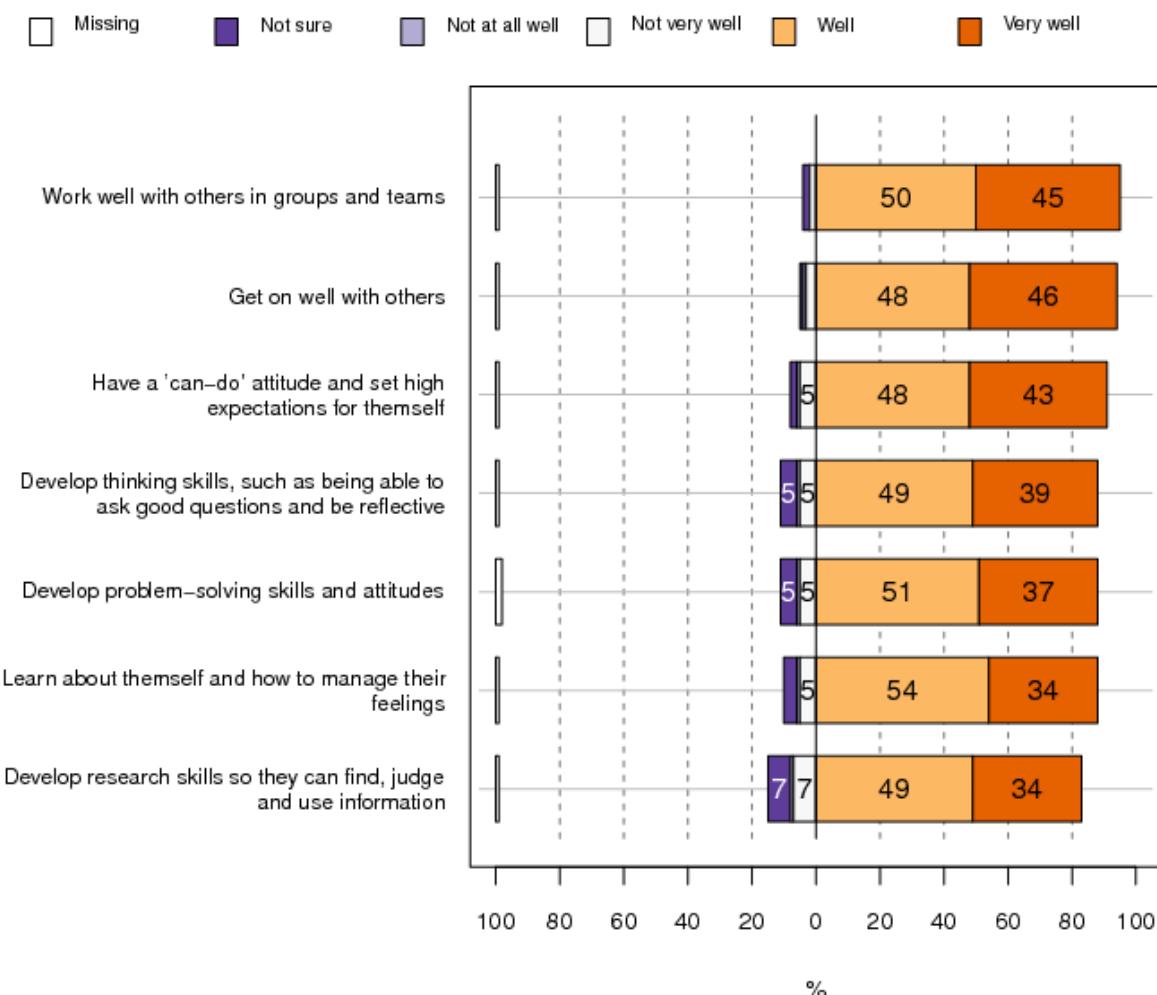
## Parents' views of school support for their child's development

The majority of parents thought their child's school was helping their child develop skills that are needed to make the most of life and to use in employment, social contributions and relationships with others. They were most positive about the school helping their child to:

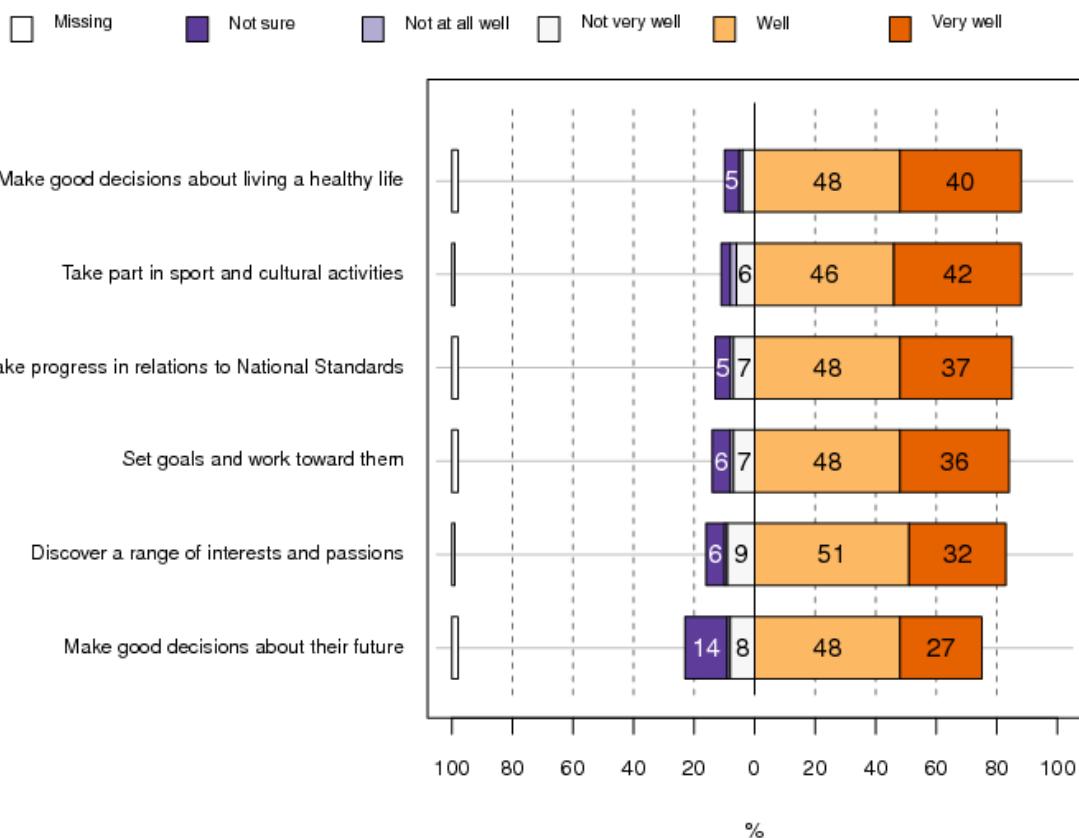
- get on well with others (46 percent strongly agreed)
- work well with others in groups or teams (45 percent strongly agreed)
- have a 'can do' attitude and set high expectations for themselves (43 percent strongly agreed)
- make good decisions about living a healthy life (40 percent strongly agreed)
- develop thinking skills, such as being able to ask good questions and be reflective (39 percent strongly agreed).

Figures 34 and 35 below show further detail.

**Figure 34 Parents' views about school support for their child's development of key competencies (n = 684)**



**Figure 35 Parents' views about school support for their child's development for the future  
(n = 684)**



Asian parents and parents whose ethnic identity was other than Māori, Pākehā, Pasifika or Asian were less likely to 'strongly agree' that their child's school supported their development in the areas we asked about, but on the whole their views were much the same as others.

Again, parents of children at decile 1–2 schools were the most likely to 'strongly agree' with the items asked and least likely to disagree or express neutral views. Parents of children at decile 9–10 schools were least likely to strongly agree that the school was helping their child to make good decisions about the future (17 percent, compared with 34 percent of parents of children attending decile 3–8 schools and 45 percent of children attending decile 1–2 schools).

Parents' views here were unrelated to their child's year level at school. The exception was again 'making good decisions about their future', with 22 percent of parents of Year 0–1 students strongly disagreeing with this, decreasing to 4 percent of parents of Year 7–8 students.

## Changes parents would like

Thirty-five percent of parents indicated they would like to change something about their child's education and 19 percent were unsure if they wanted change, much the same pattern as in

previous NZCER national surveys. As in previous surveys, parents who would like some change or were not sure if they would like change were most interested in smaller class sizes, and in having more communication about their child's progress, more information they could use to support their child's learning, and/or more individual help for students (16–19 percent each, of all parents responding).

In terms of curriculum, parents who said they would like some change did not all want the same thing: 16 percent of all parents responding said they would like more emphasis on reading, writing and maths; 12–13 percent wanted more emphasis on science and understanding how things work, real-life projects, values, relationships and social skills, more challenging work, and a greater range of extracurricular activities; 9–10 percent wanted more emphasis on art, music or drama, more hands-on learning, or more digital learning; and 8 percent wanted more use of te reo Māori, or more learning about the big issues affecting the world.

Parents' desire for change in how students relate to each other and teachers was also a theme, with 13 percent of all parents responding wanting less bullying at their child's school, 10 percent wanting better management of student behaviour, and 6–8 percent seeking more emphasis on students supporting each other, more opportunity for students to feed into decisions or make choices, or better inclusion of students with special education needs.

Although Asian parents were the most interested in making some change (44 percent), and Pasifika parents the least interested (21 percent), Pasifika parents who were interested in having some change, or who were not sure if they would like some change, were most likely to want specific change, followed by Asian parents. Pasifika parents wanted a much wider range of changes: much more emphasis on all the curriculum aspects we asked about, as well as less bullying and better inclusion of students with special needs, and more information for parents to support their child's learning. Asian parents wanted more emphasis on reading, writing and maths, on science, on art, music and drama, and more emphasis on values and social skills. Fifty-four percent of Māori parents who wanted some change wanted more use of te reo in their child's school. Māori parents were also those most interested in having more focus in their school on children's cultures (20 percent of Māori parents wanted change).

As we have seen, parents of children at decile 1–2 schools were more positive about their child's school experience. They were less likely to want to change anything at the school (27 percent, compared with 34 percent of those whose child was at a decile 3–8 school and 44 percent of those whose child was at a decile 9–10 school). However, if they wanted some change, or were not sure, they ticked more of the items we asked about than did other parents. Much higher proportions of parents whose child was at a decile 1–2 school wanted more interesting work, more individual help for students, less bullying and better management of student behaviour, as well as more opportunities to work on real-life projects, more emphasis on arts, music and drama, and more use of te reo.

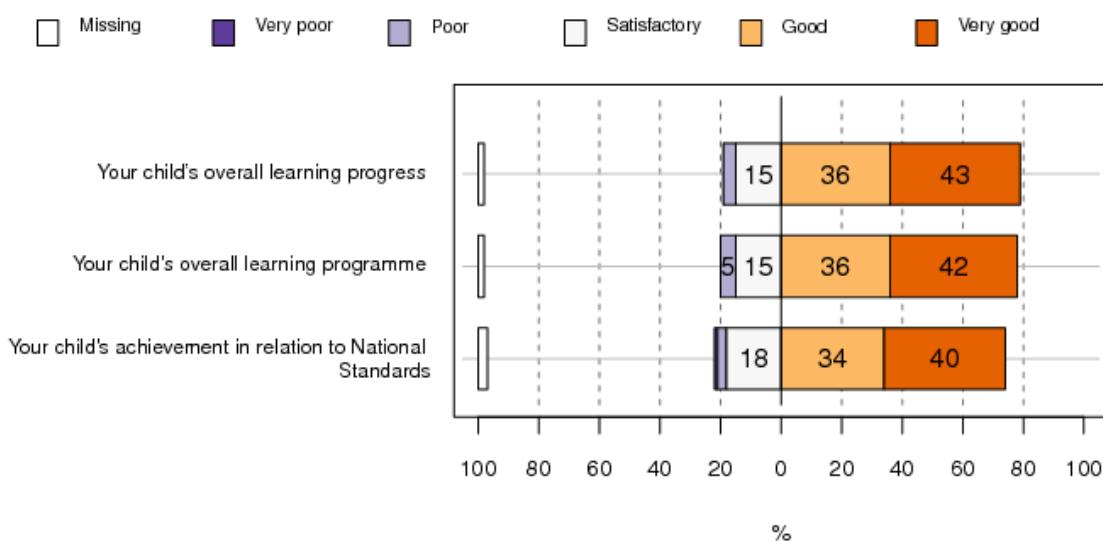
Consistent with parents' responses about their child's learning experiences, parents of Year 7–8 students were more likely to want or be unsure about wanting change (64 percent, decreasing to

51 percent of parents of Year 0–1 students). Parents of Year 7–8 students thinking about change were more likely than parents of younger students to be interested in having more communication about their progress, more individual help for students, more emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics, as well as more digital learning and opportunities for students to contribute to school decisions. Parents of Year 0–1 students showed more interest than did parents of students in higher year levels in having more use of te reo Māori, and less interest in more challenging work.

## Information about children's progress

Most parents responding were positive about the information the school gave them about their child's progress and programme (see Figure 36 below). Around a fifth rated this information as satisfactory or poor rather than good or very good.

Figure 36 Parents' views about quality of school information about their child ( $n = 684$ )



The proportion of parents who regarded the information that schools provided about their child's learning very positively had increased since 2007 (see Table 41).

Table 41 Parents' views about the information they receive, 2007–2013

View that information from the school is very good about their child's:	2007 ( $n = 754$ ) %	2010 ( $n = 550$ ) %	2013 ( $n = 684$ ) %
Overall learning programme	34	33	43
Overall learning progress	31	38	43
Achievement in relation to National Standards	*	*	41

\* Not asked.

Parents' views of the information they received about their child's programme and progress did not differ by ethnicity. They did differ by school decile, with parents at decile 1–2 schools much more positive than others for all three items. For example, 58 percent of decile 1–2 school parents rated the information they got about their child's overall learning progress as very good, compared with 43 percent of decile 3–8 school parents and 33 percent of decile 9–10 parents.

Parents of Year 7–8 students were somewhat less positive than parents of younger students about the information they received about their child's overall learning programme (66 percent rated it very good or good, compared with 78 percent overall), or their child's learning progress (69 percent rated this information as very good or good, compared with 79 percent overall).

Parents who were interested in having more information about their child's progress (29 percent) or who were unsure if they would like it (19 percent) wanted information about the assessments or tests their child has done (26 percent of all parents responding), more detailed information (21 percent), or more detail about how a National Standards judgement is made for their child (18 percent).

Twenty-four percent of parents indicated they would like online access to their child's school work and progress; 16 percent of parents already had this, and a further 26 percent were unsure whether they had such access. Asian parents were most likely to say they had online access (29 percent). Online access was related to school decile, with only 9 percent of parents whose child was at a decile 1–2 school having such access.

Parents of children at decile 1–2 schools were also less likely to say there was information about their child's progress that they did not have and would like (17 percent, compared with 38 percent of parents at decile 9–10 schools). Those who did want more information wanted much the same as other parents.

Twenty percent of all parents responding said they would like (more) ideas for how they could support their child's learning. Timeliness featured: 17 percent wanted more timely information about their child's attitudes or behaviour, and 13 percent more regular reports. Eleven percent wanted information that was easier to understand.

Student year level was largely unrelated to the additional information parents wanted. The exception was parents wanting more detail about their child's National Standards judgement, which increased from 28 percent of parents of Year 0–1 students to 49 percent of parents of Year 7–8 students.

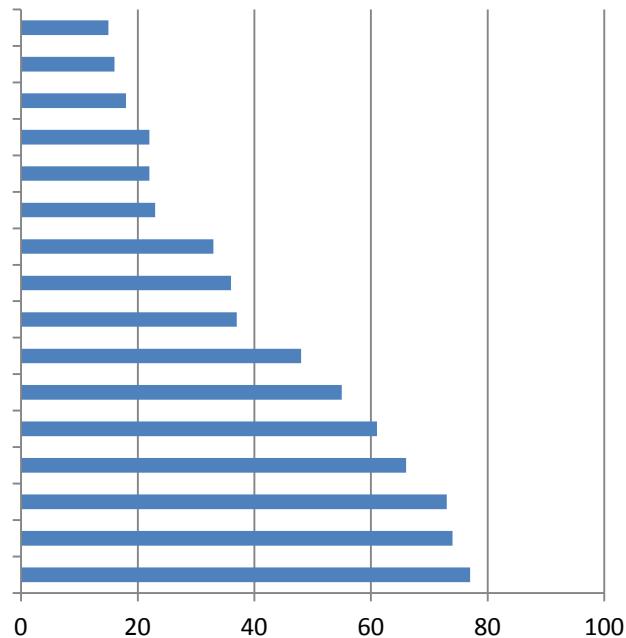
By early in term 3, 6 percent of the parents had not met their child's class teacher to discuss their child's progress. Sixty-nine percent of parents had had such meetings with their child present. It was more likely that parents of children in decile 9–10 schools had this discussion without their child present (51 percent, compared with 16 percent of those in decile 3–8 schools and 6 percent of those in decile 1–2 schools).

Thirty-two percent of parents had also discussed their child's progress with the school principal or senior school leader (around half with the child present) and 17 percent with a syndicate leader. Some of these people are likely to have also been class teachers.

## Reporting to parents on their child's mid-year progress

Around three-quarters of parents said they got clear information about their child's performance in relation to the National Standards in reading and maths in their 2013 mid-year report (see Figure 37). This shows some improvement over 2010, when 63 percent thought they had clear information on the reading standard and 59 percent on the maths standard. More parents also thought they had clear information about their child's writing performance (66 percent in 2013, compared with 52 percent in 2010). The other aspects of children's development that we asked about showed no change from 2010: no cutting back of reporting, say, on key competencies, but no increase either. Nor was there any increase in the proportion of parents who said they got useful ideas to support their child's learning.

Figure 37 **Parents' reports of clear information included in their child's 2013 mid-year report (*n* = 684)**



Pasifika and Māori parents were generally more positive about the information they had received than other parents.

School decile was unrelated to any differences of view about whether National Standards-related information was clear. When it came to other aspects of the curriculum, parents of children at decile 9–10 schools were the least positive; for example, only 9 percent said they got clear

information about their child's progress in science, compared with 15 percent overall, and 10 percent said they got clear information about their child's progress in health and physical education (compared with 32 percent of parents whose child attended a decile 1–2 school, and 24 percent of those whose child was at a decile 3–8 school). Interestingly, parents of children attending a decile 1–2 school were most likely to get a portfolio of work to show their child's progress over time (62 percent, compared with 37 percent of parents in decile 3–8 schools and 18 percent of parents in decile 9–10 schools).

Parents of Year 0–1 students were least likely to think they had clear information about where their child was in relation to the mathematics National Standards (62 percent, compared with 73 percent overall) or writing National Standards (57 percent, compared with 66 percent overall). The higher the year level, the more likely it was that parents thought they had clear information about their child's progress in the curriculum areas not included in the National Standards: science, technology, social sciences and the arts, health and physical education, and interests they had developed through school activities.

Parents' views of the National Standards are covered in chapter 4.

## Information about the school

Parents' sources of up-to-date information about their child's school were a mix of the traditional—a newsletter on paper (68 percent), other parents (41 percent)—and digital—the school website (55 percent), emailed newsletters (33 percent) and class blogs (13 percent), with a few also mentioning social media and apps or texts on cellphones. Parents were less likely to rely on sources external to the school, such as the local community newspaper (12 percent). Accountability mechanisms were also not well used by parents. Fifteen percent mentioned the school's latest ERO report, 9 percent the school's annual report, and only 1 percent the new Find a School information on the *Education Counts* website, which provides National Standards data, amongst other information.

Māori and Pasifika parents were more likely to mention newsletters on paper (81 and 91 percent, respectively) and their local community newspaper (21 percent and 24 percent, respectively), and less likely to mention emailed newsletters (19 percent and 18 percent, respectively). Pasifika parents were most likely to mention their school's annual report (27 percent).

Only 28 percent of parents whose child attended a decile 9–10 school still got school newsletters on paper, compared with 80 percent of parents whose child attended a decile 3–8 school and 85 percent of those whose child attended a decile 1–2 school.

Twenty-two percent of parents wanted more information about their child's school, and another 19 percent were unsure about this. Nineteen percent of all parents responding wanted to know more about what was taught at their child's school (its curriculum). Others wanted to know more about overall student achievement at the school (16 percent) and school progress on its annual

targets (11 percent). There were parents who wanted to know more about the school as an organisation: its use of funds (13 percent), board decisions (13 percent), school policies (12 percent), the school vision and strategic plan (9 percent), or school values (6 percent).

Pasifika parents expressed the most interest in finding out about overall student achievement at their child's school (32 percent of Pasifika parents responding), or school progress on its annual targets (29 percent). Parents whose children were at decile 1–2 schools who were interested in having more information, or were not sure if they were, showed more interest than other parents in finding out more about board decisions, the school vision and strategic plan, and school values.

## Information about education

On average, parents gained information about education from four sources, other than their child's school. Table 42 shows that they drew mainly on a mix of personal relationships, popular media and the Internet, rather than government education organisations. Interestingly, while Internet searches have increased over time (they were used by 39 percent of parents in 2007, 46 percent in 2010 and 55 percent in 2013), newspapers have remained a consistent source for just over half the parents responding since 2007. Fewer parents used ERO reports (27 percent in 2007, 24 percent in 2010 and 18 percent in 2013).

**Table 42 Parents' sources of information about education from outside their child's school  
(n = 684)**

Source	Parents %
Internet searches	55
Family	54
Newspapers	54
Other parents	53
Friends	52
TV	46
Books	38
Online news sources	29
Radio	22
Ministry of Education	20
ERO	18
Magazines	16

Pasifika parents identified the Ministry of Education as a source of information about education more than did parents from other ethnic origins (38 percent, compared with 20 percent overall),

and online news sources (38 percent), but they were less likely to identify ERO as a source (3 percent, compared with 18 percent overall). Pākehā parents were less likely to identify books (34 percent; the other ethnic groups ranged from 45 to 53 percent). Pākehā and Māori parents were less likely to identify Internet searches (53 percent and 45 percent, respectively, compared with 68–74 percent of parents coming from other ethnic groups).

School decile was largely unrelated to differences in parents' sources of information about education. However, parents of children attending decile 1–2 schools were less likely to use ERO as a source (11 percent did, compared with 17 percent of parents of children attending decile 3–8 schools, and 25 percent of parents of children attending decile 9–10 schools).

## **Parents' consultation and contact with their school's board of trustees**

Parents' views on what they saw as the key elements of the role of boards of trustees are included in Table 31. To recap here, parents were more likely to see providing strategic direction for the school (68 percent) as key to this role; they put representing parents (53 percent) at much the same level as supporting school staff or the principal (55 percent). They were much less likely to see oversight of school performance, finances or the principal as key, and few saw employment of the principal (10 percent) or acting as an agent of government (8 percent) as key to the role of their school board.

Pasifika parents were most likely to think that a key element of the role of the school board was to act as an agent of government (27 percent), but also that other key roles were to support the school staff or principal (79 percent), and represent parents (74 percent). Parents with children at decile 9–10 schools were most likely to identify key elements related to oversight of school staff and performance, and less likely to identify the board as an agent of government, or as representing parents in the school.

Forty-one percent of parents thought they had enough contact with their school's board of trustees, with a further 28 percent unsure. This is much the same as in previous NZCER surveys. When it comes to being consulted about new directions or issues at the school, 55 percent of parents felt genuinely consulted and 24 percent were unsure. Those who said they had enough contact with their school's board were more likely to feel genuinely consulted (83 percent, compared with 33 percent of those who felt they did not have enough contact). Parents with children at decile 1–2 schools were more likely to feel genuinely consulted.

Schools are required to consult their communities as they develop their school charter and annual plan (most would do this through a survey or notice in a newsletter). Half the parents said they were satisfied with the way their child's school developed its charter and annual plan, and 17 percent were unsure. Though 22 percent of parents did not know what was happening about this at

their child's school, only 3 percent of parents wanted more input. Five percent said they were not interested in the school's charter and annual plan.

Every 3 years elections are held for school boards, with ballot papers posted to parents. Forty-seven percent of the parents responding had voted in the May 2013 elections. There was no election at the schools of 5 percent of the parents (this can happen if the number of candidates matches the number of parent trustees). This pattern is consistent with previous national surveys. Interestingly, the proportion of parents in these surveys who have voted is higher than the national turnout figures. Ministry of Education figures for the 2010 trustee elections give a voter figure of 31 percent for primary and intermediate schools (ranging from 37 percent for full primary schools to 16 percent in intermediates); the 2013 figures are not yet publically available.

Parents of children in decile 9–10 schools were more likely to have voted (58 percent, compared with 37 percent in decile 1–2 schools). Interestingly, those who felt they had enough contact with their board were no more likely to vote than those who thought they did not, but both groups had more voters than parents who were unsure whether they had enough contact with their school's board.

Candidates who seemed to have the skills the school needed were chosen by 73 percent of those who voted. Those who had shown previous commitment to the school were chosen by 69 percent, and 55 percent voted for candidates they knew. Fifteen percent voted for a candidate who had experience in education, and 8 percent for someone who had served on another board. Only 3 percent said that nothing had influenced their choice because it seemed like a lottery.

Parents of children in decile 1–2 schools who had voted were more likely to choose candidates who had experience in education (26 percent, compared with 8 percent of parents of children in decile 9–10 schools), but less likely to choose candidates who had skills the school needed, probably because these skills are often not on offer to decile 1–2 schools. Fifty-four percent of these parents had done so, compared with 73 percent of parents of children at decile 3–8 schools and 82 percent of parents of children at decile 9–10 schools.

The 44 percent who had not voted in their board of trustees election said they did not vote because all the candidates seemed good (33 percent of this group), or that they did not get around to it in time (32 percent). Fourteen percent said there wasn't enough information on the candidates for them to be able to decide between them, and around 10 percent said they didn't get their voting papers in time, or not at all. A few did not vote because their child was either new in the school, or would be leaving soon (possibly a reason for the lower national turn out in intermediates, which only cover 2 school years).

Parents of children in decile 1–2 schools who had not voted were more likely to say they had not got around to it, or that they did not get the voting papers in time, but less likely to say they had not voted because all the candidates seemed good.

Sixteen percent of parents thought there was an area of school life where they would like to have a say and felt they could not. A further 9 percent were unsure if this was the case. Areas where

parents said they would like more say included what children learn, how they learn, the child's class or teacher, or student behaviour (7–8 percent each of all parents responding); how funding decisions are made, how students' cultural identity is supported, and school uniforms or dress (4–5 percent each); or school timetabling (3 percent).

While there was no overall difference in the proportion of each ethnic group who said they would like more say in their child's school, Pasifika parents who wanted a say were more interested in a wider range of areas than others. Māori parents who wanted a say were most interested in support of student culture and how funding decisions were made. Decile 1–2 parents who said they would like more say in their child's school were more likely to mention student behaviour, support of students' cultures, school timetabling, or school uniform or dress.

## Parents' involvement in their child's school

All but 13 percent of parents had some involvement in their child's school. They were most likely to take part in fundraising (51 percent), school surveys (46 percent), helping with school trips (43 percent), or attending sports (39 percent). Help in schools' everyday activities also occurred. Eighteen percent coached or helped with school sports teams, 15 percent helped in classrooms, 14 percent heard students read, and 11 percent read to students. Eleven percent also took or helped with school performance groups (such as the school production or kapa haka), 8 percent helped with arts and crafts, and 4 percent in the library. Twelve percent were on the school Parent Teacher Association or board, and 3 percent helped with building repairs and maintenance.

The 2013 pattern of parent support for their child's school was very much the same as for 2010. Compared with 2007, there appears to be some decline in helping with classroom trips: 57 percent of parents said they did so in 2007.

Pasifika and Asian parents were more likely than others to help with students reading, both reading to students and hearing students read. Parents of children in decile 1–2 schools were more likely to read to students or listen to students read, and to help with school productions or kapa haka. Parents of children in decile 9–10 schools were more likely to help with fundraising.

## Summary

The degree of choice within the New Zealand school system appears sufficient for the majority of primary and intermediate school parents. Two-thirds were choosing the school closest to their home and 26 percent were choosing a school that was not their closest. Personal knowledge and contacts, existing relationships and proximity were the major influences on family choice of school and weighed more than formal measures of school accountability, such as ERO reviews, school annual reports, or National Standards results. These were also not well used by parents to get ongoing information about their child's school. Nor were they parents' main sources of

information about education other than their child's school: parents largely drew on a mix of personal relationships, popular media and the Internet.

The majority of parents were generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling, and felt welcome in the school and comfortable talking with their child's teacher. In 2013 more parents than in 2010 thought their child found school work interesting, that the work had the right amount of challenge for their child, and that they got good ideas from teachers about how to help their child's learning. Parents were also positive about how their child's school was helping their development in the 'soft' skills needed in employment, and in social and personal relationships.

Parents of children attending decile 1–2 schools tended to be the most positive about their children's school experience. Parents in 2013 were more positive about the information they got from the school about their child's progress and programme than in 2010. Parents of Year 7–8 students were less positive about this information than parents of younger children. Around a fifth of parents would like to see some improvement in this information.

Clear information about their child's mid-year progress in reading and mathematics was reported by around three-quarters of parents, an increase since 2010. Parents of Year 0–1 students were less likely to think they had clear information about where their child was in relation to the mathematics and writing National Standards. However, there was no increase in the clarity of reporting on other *NZC* areas, such as science or key competencies, or in the proportion of parents who said they got useful ideas to support their child's learning in the mid-year reporting.

As in previous national surveys, just over half the parents wanted to see some change in their child's education, or were unsure if they wanted change. What they wanted ranged widely, from smaller class sizes, more individual help for students, more emphasis on science and real-life projects, more emphasis on reading, writing and maths, to less bullying at school.

Just over half the parents felt genuinely consulted by their school board, and half felt satisfied with the way their school developed its charter and annual plan, but there was not a marked desire for more input. Most parents had some involvement in their child's school, mainly through fundraising, school surveys, helping with school trips or attending sports, a pattern much the same as in 2010.