

**Tomorrow's Schools Review  
Independent Taskforce Meeting  
June 2018**

**Student outcomes from the New Zealand school system**

**About this paper**

1. This background paper provides the Tomorrow's Schools Review Independent Taskforce and the cross-sector advisory panel with information about how students are faring in the New Zealand school system.
2. This paper begins with a look at student achievement and progress at primary and secondary levels, participation and engagement, and school leaver outcomes and destinations.
3. The primary and secondary sections each conclude with a look at equity – how socio-economic<sup>1</sup>, gender and ethnicity factors relate to student achievement, progress and outcomes.
4. The paper continues with a look at the inclusiveness of schools and wellbeing of students using findings from recent studies and surveys.
5. Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Tertiary Education performance data is out of scope of the Review so has not been included here.

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<sup>1</sup> Usually by proxy of school decile.

## Summary

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6. Education is a major contributor to social and cultural participation and wellbeing, as well as economic participation, prosperity and growth. People with higher qualifications are more likely to be satisfied with their lives, be in paid work, and have higher earnings<sup>2</sup>.
7. At primary level, recent analysis shows that annual progress measures are very similar across sub-populations of students<sup>3</sup>, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender or ethnicity. Students' progress slows as they move through primary schooling, and at key transitions. Students experience wide variation in outcomes and many are not achieving their potential.
8. Since the mid-2000s there has been a clear upward trend in NCEA attainment at all levels, and achievement gaps between comparable social and economic groups are slowly closing. Māori school leavers from Māori-medium settings tend to achieve NCEA Level 2 at around 15-20 percentage points higher than their Māori peers in English-medium.
9. New Zealand students generally perform either at or above the averages in international studies for the foundation learning areas (reading literacy, mathematics and science) when measured against other countries, but achievement has declined against the averages since the early 2000s.
10. The biggest challenge for the school system is achieving equity and excellence in outcomes for an increasingly diverse population. While achievement gaps are closing, many Māori, Pacific, and students who attend low decile schools, continue to get poorer outcomes from the system on all measures and at all levels. Māori students, and students who attend decile 1 and 2 schools in particular, continue to be over-represented in the lowest achievement statistics.
11. In international studies, New Zealand students tend to perform well when demonstrating higher order thinking and reasoning skills in comparison with their international peers, particularly in the contexts of reading and science. However, the latest data shows a drop in performance in these skills in reading at the primary level. On average, girls are doing better than boys in literacy subjects and boys are doing better in maths and science.
12. There has been little change in the New Zealand 15-year-olds' average mathematics scores from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) from 2012 to 2015. In reading, there has been a small but steady decline in performance since 2000, and the average science score for in 2015 was significantly lower than 2006, but the same as it was in 2012.
13. Student engagement is crucial to success in education, but remains an issue for many schools. Retention data shows that many secondary schools are retaining their students longer<sup>4</sup>, but attendance data shows that only around half of senior students attend school regularly.

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education, *Education at a Glance 2017*

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education, *Education Insights, Understanding student attainment and progress*, April 2018

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Education. 2017. *Retention of students in senior secondary schools*. Accessed from: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/1955>.

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14. An increasing proportion of students are achieving NCEA Level 2 or above, setting them up to enroll in tertiary education and or/ move into employment. Around three in five school leavers enroll directly into formal tertiary qualifications, while others choose to take a year or more off before enrolling, and about a quarter do not enroll in tertiary education<sup>5</sup>.
15. At present, New Zealand has relatively high youth employment rates and low Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) rates when compared with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) averages.
16. One of the key objectives of the education system is to enable all students to reach their maximum educational potential, without barriers. Key to realising this is the inclusion of all students in all aspects of school life.
17. While most students report feeling positive about school, some students are having a less positive experience of school and are being excluded on the basis of disability, additional learning needs, and/or are experiencing discrimination and unconscious bias about aspects of their identity, culture and background.
18. The school system is involved in promoting wellbeing. A key role of schools is to provide a learning environment, a curriculum and supports that enable all students to build the social and emotional skills and competencies to support wellbeing and learning across their lifetime.
19. Some areas of health and wellbeing of students are improving. Most students report that they feel they belong at school and are liked by others. New Zealand students also report higher rates of motivation to achieve, and support from teachers than the OECD averages<sup>6</sup>.
20. Students surveyed as part of the Youth 2000 series<sup>7</sup> were generally engaging in less dangerous and risky behaviours than they used to.
21. However, New Zealand has areas of longstanding concern, including high rates of bullying, reports of racism in schools, and a rise in mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide.
22. New Zealand ranked 38<sup>th</sup> out of 41 high income countries for 'good health and wellbeing'<sup>8</sup> and had the second highest rate of bullying out of 51 OECD countries<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The main activity of the 2015 leaver cohort within one year of leaving school with NCEA level 3 or above was enrolment in a formal qualification (71.9%) with the remainder in targeted training/modern apprenticeships (2.4%) or not in education (25.8%).

<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/education-and-learning-outcomes/1907>  
<sup>6</sup> PISA Wellbeing Survey 2015, <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/pisa-2015-new-zealand-students-wellbeing-report>

<sup>7</sup> Clark, T. C., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., Denny, S., Crengle, S., Dyson, B., Fortune, S., Lucassen, M., Peiris-John, R., Robinson, E., Rossen, F., Sheridan, J., Teevale, T., Utter, J. (2013). *Youth'12 Overview: The health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students in 2012*: 1-36. Auckland, New Zealand: The University of Auckland.

<sup>8</sup> Unicef New Zealand. 2017. Innocenti Report Card- New Zealand. Accessed from: <https://www.unicef.org/nz/learn/advocacy/global-report-card>.

<sup>9</sup> PISA Wellbeing Survey 2015 (as above)

## **Primary level student progress and achievement**

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### **National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori data**

23. National Standards for reading, writing and mathematics, and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori for pānui, kōrero, tuhituhi and pāngarau, were implemented in English-medium settings in 2010, and in Māori-medium settings in 2011. These standards were a set of standardised expectations about what students should be achieving as they move through Years 1 to 8.
24. The standards gave teachers a new means to identify and address underachievement with students and their families<sup>10</sup>. They also provided a way for parents to understand how their children are progressing against the national curricula and standards. The early stages of implementation identified some issues with moderation, consistency and coverage.
25. Analyses of the National Standards data revealed a slight improvement in student achievement levels between 2011 and 2016.
26. By Year 8, there was a higher proportion of students achieving the reading standard than in maths or in writing, with the lowest achievement being in writing.
27. Analyses found the proportion of students meeting the standards decreases as they move from mid-primary to the intermediate years (7 and 8) and this is consistent with other sources.
28. The analyses also found differentials across gender, ethnicities and decile, also consistent with other sources.

### **National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA)**

29. The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA)<sup>11</sup> assesses all learning areas over a five year cycle. NMSSA samples 4,000 students in 200 English-medium state schools per year across Year 4 and Year 8<sup>12</sup>.
30. The NMSSA is designed to take into account students' achievement in all eight learning areas specified in the New Zealand Curriculum<sup>13</sup>. NMSSA incorporates the same advanced psychometric methodologies as the international studies for measuring and reporting student achievement and for exploring factors associated with that achievement.

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<sup>10</sup> *National Standards: Are they working?* Simon Collins, New Zealand Herald, 19 August 2017. [https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11898617](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11898617)

<sup>11</sup> The study has built on and extended the design of the previous National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP), which was conducted from 1995 and 2010.

<sup>12</sup> The NMSSA is not a longitudinal study that would provide individual student progress data but the achievement information for Year 4 and Year 5 can be used to derive a proxy for average progress from Year 4 to Year 5.

<sup>13</sup> The arts, health and physical education, science, English, mathematics and statistics, social sciences, technology, and learning languages.

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31. Results of NMSSA<sup>14</sup> indicate that, while the rates of progress across the curriculum from Year 4 to Year 8 look different across the learning areas, overall students are making insufficient year-on-year progress to enable them to progress across the curriculum from Year 9 to 13.
32. The NMSSA shows that at Year 4, on average, students are achieving at the expected level of the curriculum in all learning areas, but by Year 8 students are only achieving expected levels in English, the arts, health and physical education, and technology.
33. The evidence from the first cycle of NMSSA<sup>15</sup> shows that, in most learning areas (with the exception of English (reading)) a greater proportion of Year 4 students achieve at the expected curriculum level compared with Year 8 students. English (reading) is the only area where there is not a clear difference in the proportion of students achieving at the expected curriculum level between Year 4 and Year 8 (58% of Year 4 and 59% of Year 8 students).
34. The learning areas with the smallest proportions of students achieving at the expected levels by Year 8 are social studies, English (writing), and science (with the smallest proportion).
35. The NMSSA is the only dataset that includes students with moderate disabilities or learning support needs in their assessments. What we can understand from NMSSA data is that, while the average achievement of these students is lower than for students with no learning support needs, their rates of progress were similar to the total population. However, students with very high needs did not often participate, so are not represented in these findings.
36. NMSSA data is currently being used by NZCER to develop an approach to measure aspects of competency growth. Their latest report *about* competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum<sup>16</sup> suggests that competency development may usefully be estimated from three proxy capability sets drawn from the NMSSA data: critical inquiry, perspective taking, and disciplinary meaning-making.

### **Progress measures – the e-asTTle research summary**

37. The Ministry of Education has conducted research<sup>17</sup> into the achievement and progress of students in Years 4 to 10 from 2011 to 2016 using data collected from the electronic version of the Ministry's Assessment Tool for Teaching and Learning (e-asTTle). This data provides achievement information for mathematics, reading and writing for students from Year 4 to Year 10.
38. Results for students assessed at the end of the year in two consecutive years have been used for research to understand student progress.
39. Insights can be gained when looking at achievement relative to progress. The findings suggest that, while contextual factors such as ethnicity, gender and

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<sup>14</sup> [www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/nmssa/all-nmssa-publications](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/nmssa/all-nmssa-publications)

<sup>15</sup> The first cycle of NMSSA took place from 2012 to 2016, and covered all learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum*

<sup>16</sup> New Zealand Council for Educational Research, *How the key competencies evolved over time: Insights from the research*, 2018, p 12.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Education, *Education Insights, Understanding student attainment and progress*, April 2018

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school decile are strongly related to student attainment, there is no clear systemic relationship between these factors and the progress students make. This is also evident in the NMSSA findings.

40. Across each learning area, achievement differences between gender, ethnicity groupings and socio-economic<sup>18</sup> sub-groups exist, but there is no systemic difference in the average annual progress made by students of these different sub-groups.
41. This research suggests the system is supporting students to progress at similar rates regardless of their starting points, socio-economic background, gender or ethnicity, but does not support the accelerated progress that would be necessary to address disparity and support all students to reach their potential.
42. It also found that yearly progress in mathematics and reading declines, on average, as students transition through their years of schooling from Year 4 to Year 8.
43. The e-asTTle dataset used for this research has some limitations. The sample of students is not a research sample. Not all schools use the e-asTTle tool and schools that use it do not use it with all their students. Low decile schools are more likely to use the e-asTTle tools, especially in secondary. To correct for this bias, the Years 9-10 data for this research has been weighted.
44. The sample of students assessed at the end of the year using e-asTTle for two consecutive years, used for understanding student progress, is much smaller and therefore the results regarding progress are less stable than the results regarding achievement.

### **International benchmarking and trends at primary level**

45. New Zealand participates in a range of international assessment studies that allow comparisons to be made between our students' learning and achievement with that of students in other countries. These studies also help identify system-level strengths and weaknesses.
46. As well as taking part in one-off studies, New Zealand regularly takes part in two IEA<sup>19</sup> studies: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).
47. These studies provide information on student achievement in three core areas: reading, mathematics, and science, and they also allow New Zealand's performance to be tracked over time. TIMSS and PIRLS examine students' thinking and reasoning skills and strategies.

### ***Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)***

48. PIRLS assesses Year 5 students' reading comprehension in English or te reo Māori of texts that are likely to be read by young students both in and outside of school. New Zealand has participated in PIRLS since 2001 and every five years thereafter.

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<sup>18</sup> by proxy of decile

<sup>19</sup> The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

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49. Generally, compared with their international peers, New Zealand school students have performed well.
50. The recent evidence from PIRLS showed New Zealand students still performing above the OECD mean average, but showing weaker performance in reading overall, particularly at the top end of the achievement distribution. Our more able readers in 2015 had weaker performance than more able readers in 2010<sup>20</sup>.
51. PIRLS data shows that New Zealand students are relatively good at interpreting, reasoning and evaluating written texts.
52. Girls and boys both generally achieved above the international mean averages. The difference between boys and girls is larger in New Zealand than many other countries, with girls getting better results. There was a moderate increase in the mean for Pacific students, largely due to stronger performance among Pacific girls.
53. New Zealand students were moderately positive about reading, but much less confident about it than their international peers. This is important because students who lacked confidence scored about 120 score points lower, on average, than those who were very confident. This could be as much as two years' worth of learning<sup>21</sup>.

### ***Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)<sup>22, 23</sup>***

54. TIMSS assesses mathematics and science achievement four-yearly at Year 5 and Year 9 with a focus on curriculum, teaching and learning. It aims to identify the most promising teaching practices from around the world. New Zealand has participated since 1994.
55. TIMSS data shows that New Zealand students perform relatively well in higher-order thinking, compared with simpler tasks like recalling knowledge and using procedures.
56. At the primary level, the most recent maths achievement information (2014 TIMSS data) suggests a halt, or even a turnaround, in the downward trend in student performance that was observed at successive cycles from 2002 to 2011.
57. The most recent science achievement information (2014) also suggests a turnaround in the downward trend in performance that was observed at successive cycles from 2002 to 2011, with a return to a level first observed in 1994.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2539/pirls-201516/pirls-201516>

<sup>21</sup> Professional opinion about the equivalence of learning is likely to vary greatly.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2571/timss-201415/timss-2015-new-zealand-year-5-maths-results>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2571/timss-201415/timss-2015-new-zealand-year-5-science-results>

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### Equity at primary level

58. There is large natural variation in how students learn, but New Zealand has larger variation between its high performers and its low performers than many other countries. At the primary level there can be as many as two curriculum levels, or four years of learning, between students of the same Year level.
59. On average, student progress from Year 4 to Year 8 is similar regardless of school decile, but students in low-decile schools leave primary school on average two years below students from high-decile schools.
60. Māori and Pacific students attend mid and lower-decile schools in higher proportions, and on average scored lower in national and international assessments than students from other ethnic groups.
61. When socio-economic factors were accounted for in the NMSSA and e-asTTle data, there was still an achievement gap that shows the system is not adequately supporting learning for Māori and Pacific students.
62. Boys are performing lower than girls in literacy, which matches the trends in international data. Evidence from PIRLS shows that at Year 5 the achievement in reading is generally higher for girls and that the difference between girls and boys is larger in New Zealand than many other countries.
63. The NMSSA also shows this gender difference in English (reading, writing, listening and viewing). The average difference in achievement between Year 4 boys and girls in English (reading) is equivalent to the average amount of progress measured over about one year of schooling<sup>24</sup>.
64. The recent insights into progress and attainment data shows that students may begin at different starting points but have similar rates of progress. However, this means many students are not receiving adequate support and/or teaching to catch up and end up finishing school with lower achievement than their peers.
65. The gender, ethnic, and decile achievement differences are longstanding, as observed by NMSSA and the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP – predecessor to NMSSA). International evidence confirms that these patterns of inequality are relatively stable.
66. New research using Statistics New Zealand's Integrated Data Infrastructure can aid understanding of the distribution and impact of socio-economic disadvantage in schools. The Equity Index is applied to all children currently in the school-aged population and maintains individual and family privacy. The index can provide valuable insights into the distribution and concentration of socio-economically disadvantaged students and the relationship with educational outcomes.

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<sup>24</sup> The NMSSA estimated the average year progress by subtracting the average achievement at Year 8 from the average achievement at Year 4 and annualise it by dividing by 4.

## Secondary level student progress and achievement

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### Year 9-10

67. Analyses of e-asTTle data at Year 9 and 10 shows a continuation of the trends found in primary school, but also reveals a drop in progress as students transition from Year 8 to Year 9. The first year of a transition from primary or intermediate school to secondary school (Year 9) is associated with the lowest mean annual progress for all three learning areas.
68. New Zealand's participation in the TIMSS<sup>25</sup> has provided us with a long term picture of achievement at Year 9 in mathematics and science.
69. At the lower secondary level, New Zealand's average maths performance is only just above the OECD averages and has never featured as a strong discipline for New Zealand students compared with other countries.
70. Conversely, science performance at the lower secondary level has always featured as a discipline where New Zealand students fared relatively 'well' internationally, and compared to their overall performance in maths. However, while there had been a positive shift in the early 2000s this was not sustained, with Year 9 students achieving now about the same as their peers in the mid-1990s.

### Years 11-13

#### ***The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)***

71. NCEA Levels 1-3 results provide information about student achievement at upper secondary level.
72. Over the past 11 years, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of students gaining NCEA at all three levels. In 2016, 89% of school leavers left with an NCEA qualification of at least Level 1, 80% had achieved Level 2 or above, and 54% left with Level 3. 41% of school leavers achieved a University Entrance<sup>26</sup> award.
73. More students have completed school with qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3. The proportion of all students leaving school with less than NCEA level 2 has decreased by 13 percentage points between 2009 and 2016.
74. The rate of increase in attainment of NCEA qualifications has been greatest for Māori and Pacific students and the percentage point gap between these groups and European or Asian students is closing<sup>27</sup>. However, there is still a gap, and closing this gap remains a key challenge for the school system.

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<sup>25</sup> New Zealand has participated every four years since 1994. New Zealand did not assess Year 9 in 2006 because of the overlap with PISA in this same year.

<sup>26</sup> The minimum requirement to enter a New Zealand university is University Entrance (UE). To qualify a student needs to pass NCEA Level 3 with 14 credits in each of three approved subjects at Level 3; 10 Literacy credits at Level 2 or above, and 10 Numeracy credits at Level 1 or above.

<sup>27</sup> In 2017 the gap between girls and boys did not close at Level 1, but when plotted the trend is true over all the years. The gap was largest at higher levels in 2008 but percentage point gap is smallest at Level 2 in recent years.

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75. Māori school leavers from Māori-medium settings tend to achieve NCEA Level 2 at a similar level to non-Māori in English medium, and around 15-20 percentage points higher than their Māori peers in English-medium.
76. Figures from 2008 to 2017 show girls are attaining NCEA at higher rates than boys, however this gap is also closing.
77. Although the gap between attainment at low decile schools and high decile schools is large, it too has been reducing. For example, among Year 12 students attaining NCEA Level 2, the gap between low and high decile schools reduced from 8.9 percentage points in 2016 to 8.1 percentage points in 2017.

### **International comparisons at secondary level**

#### ***Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)<sup>28</sup>***

78. PISA is a three-yearly international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by assessing the reading, mathematics, and science literacy skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. New Zealand has participated since 2000.
79. As with the IEA studies, PISA scores across a range of indicators can be used to compare a country's performance against other countries, or to track a country's performance over time.
80. Looking across average scores in reading, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy<sup>29</sup>, New Zealand students generally perform well above the OECD average in reading and science and a little above average in mathematics. However there have been small, non-significant decreases over time in all three domains.
81. 2015 results show that New Zealand has relatively low equity in learning outcomes. There is a wider gap between the top ten percent and bottom ten percent of our students than in most other OECD countries.
82. The proportion of lower-performing students has increased over time and Māori and Pacific students are generally over-represented among lower achievers and under-represented among higher achievers. However, Māori and Pacific students are represented at all proficiency levels.

#### ***PISA Mathematics scores***

83. There was very little change in New Zealand students' average mathematics score from PISA 2012 (500 points) to PISA 2015 (495 points) but it has dropped by 28 points since 2003<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, the New Zealand students' average score was significantly lower than the averages of 19 other participating countries.
84. Since 2003 there has also been an increase in the proportion of lower-performing students together with a decrease in the proportion of high

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2543/pisa-2015/pisa-2015-summary-report>

<sup>29</sup> As different to New Zealand's science and mathematics curriculum context.

<sup>30</sup> Over the same time period, Finland has dropped 33 points and Australia has dropped 30 points, while Germany and Poland have made gains and now have higher scores than New Zealand.

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achievers, however these proportions are in line with the OECD average and other countries with a similar average score.

### ***PISA Reading scores***

85. There has been a small but steady decline in 15-year-old students' reading performance since 2000<sup>31</sup>, with the biggest decline occurring from 2009 to 2012.
86. New Zealand's average reading score in PISA 2015 was similar to the PISA 2012 score but significantly lower than the reading score in 2000.
87. However the average reading score for New Zealand's 15-year-old students was significantly higher than the OECD average in each cycle.

### ***PISA Science scores***

88. While New Zealand performs above the international OECD science mean average, and its standing has improved over time, the most recent science achievement information for 15-year-old students (2015) shows their performance to be weaker than their 2006 counterparts. Furthermore there has been a small increase in the proportion of lower achievers along with a decrease in the proportion of high achievers since 2006<sup>32</sup>.
89. The average science score for 15-year-olds in 2015 was significantly lower than that of their peers in 2006, but the same as it was in 2012. The majority of the decline occurred between 2009 and 2012.
90. The average science score for New Zealand students was higher than the OECD mean in all cycles.

### **Student engagement**

91. Key to achievement is student engagement. Schools have a key role in promoting positive engagement as a foundation for learning.
92. The rates of regular attendance<sup>33</sup> are low for many groups of students, and have not improved much since 2011. Senior girls and boys, Māori and Pacific students, and students enrolled in lower decile school attend less regularly (all around 50%) than the national average (63%). Around 71% of students enrolled in higher decile schools attend regularly.
93. NMSSA data shows that students who report greater numbers of absences and instances of being late for school have lower achievement on average.
94. Enrolment in school is compulsory for all students aged between 6 and 16 years. The number of students leaving early is decreasing. The rate of early

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<sup>31</sup> Reading was the main domain to be assessed in PISA 2000. Comparisons for reading can be made across all years from 2000 onwards.

<sup>32</sup> Science was the main domain to be assessed in PISA 2006. Comparisons for science can be only made from 2006 onwards.

<sup>33</sup> Regular attendance is measured as attending over 90% of half days.

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leaving exemptions for 15-year-olds has dropped by 88% since a peak rate in 2005<sup>34</sup>.

95. Overall, more students are staying in education until age 18 and participating in higher level tertiary education. Girls are more likely to stay at school until 17 than boys (86.3% compared to 81.0%)<sup>35</sup>. Māori and Pacific students, girls, and students who attend low decile schools are leaving early or missing school at higher rates than their peers.<sup>36</sup>
96. Disciplinary action (stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions) is a school's response to student behaviour, and as such is not a measure of student behaviour, but of the school's reaction to it. Disciplinary action can have significant impacts on the students and result in long periods of disengagement and/or alternative education pathways.
97. Male students have consistently received stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions or expulsions far more frequently than female students.<sup>37</sup> Māori students and students from low decile schools have the highest rate of early leaving exemptions and are more likely to be truant. Students enrolled in decile 1 and 2 schools are more likely to receive disciplinary action than students enrolled in decile 9 and 10 schools.
98. Overall, Māori students have higher rates of stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions than any other ethnic group at:
  - 37.7 stand-downs per 1000 for Māori compared with 15.7 for Pākeha and 24.8 for Pacific;
  - 7.6 suspensions per 1000 for Māori compared with 2.3 for Pākeha and 4.3 for Pacific, and
  - 3 exclusions per 1000 for Māori compared with 0.9 for Pākeha and 1.9 for Pacific.
99. Pacific students have the highest expulsion rates of any ethnic group at 3.6 per 1000 compared with 0.5 for Pākeha and 1.8 for Māori.
100. The transition from primary to secondary school is a time where young people often disengage, resulting in significant barriers to learning.<sup>38</sup> Data indicates that disengagement escalates over this transition point: the number of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and non-enrolments escalates at age 12 and peaks at age 14, with a similar pattern seen for truancy. This difficulty following transition is also related to a higher likelihood of dropping out of education.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This is largely a result of the Ministry of Education strengthening its early leaving application and approval process in May 2007.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/1955>

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Education. 2017. *Early leaving exemptions*. Accessed from:

<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/1951>;

and Ministry of Education. 2017. *Retention of students in senior secondary schools*. Accessed from:

<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/1955>.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/stand-downs-suspensions-exclusions-expulsions>

<sup>38</sup> *Evaluation at a Glance: Transitions from Primary to Secondary School*, Education Review Office, November 2012.

<sup>39</sup> McGee, C., Ward, R., Gibbons, J., and Harlow, A. (2003) *Transition to Secondary School: A Literature Review*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

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101. Chronic truancy is also a strong predictor of negative outcomes in later life. Some children and young people miss significant periods of school due to non-enrolment. Rates of non-enrolment in compulsory schooling are falling for all ethnicities. In 2012 Māori young people were non-enrolled at the rate of 14.3 per 1,000, Pacific young people at the rate of 8.8 per 1,000, compared with Pākeha young people at the rate of 2.1 per 1,000.<sup>40</sup>
102. Transience is a major predictor of non-achievement. Students who have moved school twice or more across Year 9 to Year 11 are less than half as likely to achieve NCEA Level 2 or above by the time they leave school compared to those who have not moved school.<sup>41</sup> Māori students and students from lower decile schools are also more likely to be transient than the total population. In 2016, Māori had the highest levels of transience at over 12 transients per 1,000 enrolled versus about 5 per 1,000 in the total population<sup>42</sup>.
103. The *Youth '12* survey found that 95% of students indicated that it was somewhat important or very important that they attend school every day.<sup>43</sup> However, PISA 2015 found that the percentage of children who had skipped a day of school in the two weeks prior to the PISA examination had increased since 2012.<sup>44</sup>

### School leaver destinations

104. At present, tertiary enrolments are the most popular destination of school leavers within one year of leaving. However, enrolment does not mean that a student will complete the qualification.
105. In 2015 there were 60,600 domestic school leavers. Of these, 60.3% (36,500 students) had enrolled in tertiary education at all levels by the end of 2016. Enrolments in tertiary education are indicators of the extent to which New Zealanders are developing the skills needed for a modern knowledge economy. Student enrolment patterns in tertiary education are highly linked to the strength of the labour market.
106. Around three in five school leavers enroll directly into formal tertiary qualifications, while others choose to take a year or more off before enrolling, and about a quarter do not enroll in tertiary education. The main activity of the 2015 leaver cohort within one year of leaving school with NCEA level 3 or above was enrolment in a formal qualification (71.9%) with the remainder in targeted training/modern apprenticeships (2.4%) or not in education (25.8%).

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<sup>40</sup> "Non-enrolled Students". Education Counts, <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/non-enrolled-students>

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Education. 2017. *Transient Students*. Accessed from: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/147503/2016-Transient-Students-Indicator-Report.pdf](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/147503/2016-Transient-Students-Indicator-Report.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Clark, T. C., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., Denny, S., Crengle, S., Dyson, B., Fortune, S., Lucassen, M., Peiris-John, R., Robinson, E., Rossen, F., Sheridan, J., Teevale, T., Utter, J. (2013). *Youth'12 Overview: The health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students in 2012*: 1-36. Auckland, New Zealand: The University of Auckland.

<sup>44</sup> Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. 2018. *PISA 2015: Results in Focus*. Accessed from: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>

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107. Māori and Pacific school leavers are more likely to be enrolled in foundation courses, certificates, and diplomas than any other ethnic group. Based on the 2014 school leaver cohort, 38.1% of Māori and 37.5% of Pacific in tertiary education were enrolled in levels one to seven (non-degree) in 2015, compared to 28.7% of all leavers.
108. Compared with other OECD countries, New Zealand has fairly high youth employment, but within New Zealand the youth employment rates are lower compared with adult rates. In 2016, New Zealand had a relatively large proportion of young people aged 18 to 24 years who were not in education, but were in employment; at 42% this was the fourth highest in the OECD and compared with the OECD average of 32%.
109. The number of young New Zealanders aged 15 to 19 who are not employed, in education or training (NEET) is now back to pre-recession levels and is lower than the OECD average for this age group. The 2016 New Zealand NEET rate for 18 to 24 year olds was 13%, compared with the OECD average of 15%<sup>45</sup>. However, New Zealand's rate is still high when compared with the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

### Equity at secondary level

110. There is a clear correlation between the decile of the school the student attended and the percentage of students attaining at least an NCEA level 2 or equivalent.
111. There is a lot of variation in achievement rates among schools within each decile; some schools in the lowest deciles have a greater proportion of students achieving a level 2 qualification than some schools in the highest deciles.
112. Socio-economic differences are not only reflected in the final attainment rates but also in the way credits are attained. A higher proportion of students at low decile schools are gaining qualifications from mainly internally assessed standards, while at high decile schools more students are entering external assessments and gaining credits in the important pre-requisite standards for continuing study at a higher level<sup>46</sup>.
113. 2016 School leaver data shows unequal NCEA Level 2 attainment when disaggregated by ethnicity:
  - Asian students had the highest attainment at 91.1%, followed by
  - European/Pākeha at 83.7%,
  - Pacific at 74.7% and
  - Māori at 66.5%<sup>47</sup>.
114. Māori and Pacific school leavers have made the biggest gains in attaining Level 2 NCEA or equivalent, indicating that the disparities between ethnic

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<sup>45</sup> From *OECD At a Glance 2017*: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/education-at-a-glance/how-does-new-zealands-education-system-compare-oecd-education-at-a-glance-2017>

<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Education, NCEA Review: Trends in NCEA | Taumata Mātauranga ā-Motu Kua Taea, April 2018.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/education-and-learning-outcomes/1781>

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groups are reducing over time. Overall, Pacific populations have made bigger gains than Māori.

115. PISA 2015 results showed that, overall, European/Pākehā and Asian students scored above the OECD average in science, reading and mathematics, while Māori and Pacific students scored well below the OECD average in all three subjects.
116. A relatively high proportion of Māori and Pacific students scored in the lower proficiency levels in all three PISA subjects compared to New Zealand students overall. However, Māori and Pacific students are represented at all proficiency levels. For instance, 3% of Māori students in mathematics, 4% in reading and 5% in science achieve at the top levels of proficiency.
117. TIMSS and PISA both show that science and mathematics achievement was higher, on average, for students in schools with more socio-economically advantaged students than disadvantaged students. In both studies, the difference in science and mathematics achievement between these two groupings was higher in New Zealand than in most other countries.
118. Across both TIMSS and PISA, Māori had lower average maths achievement than non-Māori. Similarly, Pacific students had lower average maths achievement than non-Pacific. Analyses show that this achievement gap narrows when socio-economic factors are taken into account<sup>48</sup>, but some differences still remain.
119. While gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status<sup>49</sup> are highly correlated with attainment, these factors do not predetermine a student's performance. For any group of students with similar socio-economic backgrounds, the range in performance is considerable, and this is also true for students from different ethnic backgrounds and for boys and girls.
120. At Year 9 there is no difference between girls' and boys' average performance in either maths or science<sup>50</sup>. PISA however, shows girls generally have higher reading literacy scores, whereas boys tend to have slightly stronger performance in maths, and there is no noticeable difference in their average science scores.
121. Girls have higher overall NCEA Level 2 attainment rates than boys.
122. The average PISA scores of New Zealand 15-year-olds in reading, science and mathematics have declined over the 2000s. Our highest attaining students continue to do well, but the proportion of high performers has decreased in each domain of science, mathematics and reading. However, New Zealand still has one of the largest proportions of students who are top performers in all three PISA core domains.

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<sup>48</sup> [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/181569/Mathematics-achievement-What-we-know-from-NZs-participation-in-TIMSS-2014-15-and-PISA-2015.pdf](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/181569/Mathematics-achievement-What-we-know-from-NZs-participation-in-TIMSS-2014-15-and-PISA-2015.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> School decile is used in New Zealand data as proxy for socio-economic status.

<sup>50</sup> Boys had a wider range of scores in both TIMSS Year 9 maths and science assessments.

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123. Socio-economic status now appears to be a weaker predictor of student achievement than in previous cycles of PISA<sup>51</sup>.
124. For 15-year-olds, the average maths score for Māori, Asian and European/Pākehā students decreased significantly between 2003 and 2015. Over this period, average scores for Pacific students did not change significantly.
125. The average science scores for Māori and Pacific 15-year-olds have not changed significantly since 2006, but Asian and European/Pākehā students had significantly lower scores in 2015 than 2006, but similar to 2012.
126. The proportion of Māori and Pacific populations who are NEET is higher than European/Pākehā and Asian populations. In March 2017, the NEET rate for Māori was 19.5% and 17.0% for Pacific peoples, compared with 10.4% for Asian and 10.2% for European populations<sup>52</sup>. The NEET rates are higher for females.

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2571/timss-201415/mathematics-achievement-what-we-know-from-new-zealands-participation-in-timss-201415-and-pisa-2015>

<sup>52</sup> These figures from The Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) March 2017 reported NEET rates for 15-24 year-olds (compared with 2016 OECD reported NEET rate of 13% for 18-24 year-olds) [.http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/employment-skills/labour-market-reports/pacific-peoples-labour-market-trends/march-2017/neet](http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/employment-skills/labour-market-reports/pacific-peoples-labour-market-trends/march-2017/neet)

## Inclusive education

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127. Inclusive education is a right grounded in the Education Act 1989, enshrined in a number of international obligations and backed up by the *New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.
128. Inclusive education is about giving every student fair and equal treatment, catering for diverse needs and expectations, and supporting all students to reach their maximum educational potential, without prejudice or discrimination.
129. For the purposes of this paper, student diversity encapsulates differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, ability, identity, language and development.

## Most students are positive about their school

130. The University of Auckland's Youth'12 survey of 8,500<sup>53</sup> randomly selected secondary school students<sup>54</sup> found mostly positive indications about school, including that:
- most students (90%) thought school was okay (29% of those liked school a lot)
  - most students (87%) felt safe at school all or most of the time
  - about half of students reported that teachers treat students fairly most of the time. It was more common for students aged 17 years or older (60%), and students from low deprivation neighbourhoods (56%) to think that teachers are fair most of the time
  - most students (over 90%) reported that people at their school expect them to do well.
131. TIMSS 2014/15 and PIRLS 2015/16 have captured information about New Zealand students' sense of belonging at school.<sup>55</sup>
132. These studies used the *Students' Sense of School Belonging* scale<sup>56</sup> to get a sense of school climate. Students were asked how much they agreed with five statements about their attitude toward school, including whether they felt safe, liked being at school, and felt proud to be going to their school.
133. TIMSS 2014/15 showed two-thirds of Year 5 students and nearly half of Year 9 students had a high sense of school belonging. Students who had a high sense of belonging tended to have higher mathematics and science achievement than those with a lower sense of belonging.

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<sup>53</sup> 125 composite and secondary schools were randomly selected to participate in the survey. Of these, 91 schools took part. The majority of participating schools were state-funded, co-educational and large schools (at least 350 Year 9-15 students).

<sup>54</sup> Clark, T. C., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., Denny, S., Crengle, S., Dyson, B., Fortune, S., Lucassen, M., Peiris-John, R., Robinson, E., Rossen, F., Sheridan, J., Teevale, T., Utter, J. (2013). *Youth'12 Overview: The health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students in 2012*: 1-36. Auckland, New Zealand: The University of Auckland.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2571/timss-201415/new-zealands-school-climate-for-learning-what-we-know-from-timss-201415>

<sup>56</sup> Add reference

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134. PIRLS 2015/16 showed a similar pattern for Year 5 students, who were more likely to have higher sense of belonging than many of their international peers. Year 5 students who had a high sense of belonging generally had higher reading achievement than their peers with some sense or little sense of belonging.
135. Even though most students felt safe at school, both studies showed that New Zealand students experienced bullying behaviours at school more frequently than students in many of the other participating countries. Students in more economically disadvantaged schools were more likely to report they experienced negative behaviours than those in less economically disadvantaged schools.

### **Some students are having a less positive experience at school**

136. A report<sup>57</sup> capturing student views was recently released by NZSTA and the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC). *Education Matters to Me* collates the responses from a diverse group of students in the Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch regions<sup>58</sup>.
137. Many students who responded to the survey enjoy school and believe it meets their needs well. However, many students who are Māori or Pacific, with disabilities, or have been excluded from school felt their unique learning needs are not being met. They shared common insights about experiencing marginalisation and discrimination.
138. The report identified six key insights:
  - Students want to be seen for who they are, and understood in the context of their home, life and experiences
  - Many students experience racism at school and are treated unequally because of their culture
  - Trusted relationships with their teacher are key to learning and keeping them engaged in school
  - Students want their teacher to teach them according to their strengths and unique abilities
  - Students need to be happy and in a comfortable learning environment before they can learn
  - Students want to have a say in their education and their own lives, and they want teachers to involve them in their learning.

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<sup>57</sup> Available on the NZSTA and Office of the Children's Commissioner websites

<sup>58</sup> Responses were drawn from many Māori and Pacific students, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, those with diagnosed learning difficulties, and students with disabilities, and in primary and secondary schools, alternative education units, early childhood centres, kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, learning support units, homebased schools and teen parent units.

***Students with disabilities and with additional learning needs***

139. Almost all students (99.5%) attend a mainstream school. About a third of students with some of the highest needs (ie. those receiving the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS)) are enrolled in a special school<sup>59</sup>.
140. In 2014, the Education Review Office (ERO) evaluated a representative sample of 152 schools<sup>60</sup> to examine how well they were including students with special education needs. The evaluation found that over three-quarters (78%) of the sample were demonstrating mostly inclusive practices. This has improved since 2009 when ERO found that 30% of schools in a sample had pockets of inclusive practice and 20% had few inclusive practices.
141. ERO found that almost all of the schools sampled in 2014 were positive about including students with special education needs, and felt confident about providing a fully inclusive school experience.
142. Despite the findings from the evaluation, there is anecdotal evidence<sup>61</sup> that students with disabilities and additional learning needs are:
- not being allowed to enrol
  - being asked to move to other schools
  - being suspended or excluded on the basis of their additional learning needs
  - only being allowed to attend school for part of the day
  - not being able to take part in school camp, swimming or other curricular activities.
143. Figures provided to the Independent Monitoring Mechanism of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>62</sup> show that between 2011 and 2015 the Human Rights Commission received on average 53 complaints each year alleging disability discrimination at schools. This was about a third of all the disability discrimination complaints it received.
144. The Office of the Ombudsman also received 11 complaints relating to the stand-down, suspension, exclusion or expulsion of students with special educational needs between 2013 and 2015.

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<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Education Learning Support data and slides for Strategy session, 21 February 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Education Review Office. 2015. *Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools*. Accessed from: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Inclusive-practices-for-students-with-special-needs-in-schools.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Education. 2017. Internal reporting; Youth Law. 2016. *Challenging the Barriers: Ensuring access to education for children with special educational needs*. Accessed from: <http://youthlaw.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Challenging-the-Barriers.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Independent Monitoring Mechanism of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 2016. *The Right to an Inclusive Education: Implementation Report*. Accessed from: [https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/5814/6758/2123/IMM\\_Interim\\_Implementation\\_Report\\_final.pdf](https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/5814/6758/2123/IMM_Interim_Implementation_Report_final.pdf)

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145. Statistics New Zealand's 2013 Disability Survey<sup>63</sup> found that 24% of students with disabilities have an unmet need for help with schoolwork in class. It also found that 20% of these students had had their schooling interrupted, while 11% had had to change schools, 3% had to live away from home and 19% had difficulty attending the school for the whole day.
146. There is limited information at system level about the learning outcomes for students with disabilities.
147. Latest labour market statistics show that the NEET rate for disabled youth (42.3%) was over four times that of non-disabled youth (10%). Only one-third of disabled youth participated in the labour force. Disabled youth were also more likely than non-disabled youth to have no qualifications.<sup>64</sup>

### **Māori and Pacific students**

148. A 2017 New Zealand research paper for UNESCO<sup>65</sup> found evidence that teachers in New Zealand display negative bias, particularly towards Māori and Pacific students, in relation to their identity, language and culture.
149. The Treasury's 2016 research<sup>66</sup> about unconscious bias and education found that some teachers demonstrate unconscious bias towards Māori and Pacific students and expect them to underachieve.
150. Some teachers are not setting up respectful, reciprocal, and responsive relationships with students and their whānau.
151. The 2016 NZCER national survey of English-medium primary and intermediate teachers<sup>67</sup> found that 97%<sup>68</sup> of teachers surveyed agreed that part of their teaching practice includes a promotion of school values that encourage inclusion and respect. 82% of primary and intermediate principals thought that their school's practices and programmes that promote inclusion and respect for diversity were well embedded in their schools.
152. This survey found that fewer teachers agreed with statements regarding inclusion or promotion of Māori and Pacific cultural identities in their teaching practice, for example 88% of teachers surveyed agreed that they promoted Māori cultural values in their classroom (35% who strongly agreed and 53% who just agreed).

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<sup>63</sup> Youth Law. 2016. *Challenging the Barriers: Ensuring access to education for children with special educational needs*. Accessed from: <http://youthlaw.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Challenging-the-Barriers.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/forty-two-percent-of-disabled-youth-not-earning-or-learning>

<sup>65</sup> Alton-Lee, Adrienne. 2017. *Walking the talk' matters in the use of evidence for transformative education*. Accessed from:

[https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/183574/Alton-Lee-Walking-the-talk-matters-in-the-use-of-evidence-for-transformative-education-invited-paper-UNESCO-2017.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/183574/Alton-Lee-Walking-the-talk-matters-in-the-use-of-evidence-for-transformative-education-invited-paper-UNESCO-2017.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Blank, Anton, Houkamau, Dr Carla and Dr Hautahi Kingi. 2016. *Unconscious Bias and Education: A comparative study of Māori and African American students*. Oranui; Timperley, Helen and Sarah Mayo. 2016. *Accountability*. Accessed from: <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/downloads/pdfs/oia/oia-20170044.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> [www.nzcer.org.nz/teachers\\_national-survey-2016](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/teachers_national-survey-2016)

<sup>68</sup> This was made up of 64% of teachers who strongly agreed and a further 33% who just agreed. A small minority did not agree or were neutral.

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153. The survey also found that decile 1 and 2 schools have greater emphasis on culturally responsive practices than decile 3-10 schools.
154. NZCER surveyed secondary teachers and principals in 2015<sup>69</sup> and found that only around half the teachers agreed their professional learning had provided practical help for engaging with Māori students and their whānau, and even fewer for Pacific students. However, 82% of secondary principals agreed that their school's practices and programmes that promote inclusion and respect for diversity were well embedded in their school and a further 16% said they were partially embedded.
155. 2010 research from Victoria University, *Youth Choices, Youth Voices*<sup>70</sup>, found that immigrant students adapt just as well or better in terms of adjusting to school than Māori and Pakeha/European students. Students who have poor English language proficiency and a less defined sense of identity are more likely to not adjust to school than other groups of migrant youth.

### **LGBTQIA+ students**

156. The current terminology to describe gender and sexuality diverse people is LGBTQIA+, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, intersex, asexual and other identities.
157. Data and research on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in primary schools is currently limited, and due to their younger age, is more likely to be about gender diversity.
158. Some of the discomfort experienced by LGBTQIA+ students can stem from school arrangements such as uniforms, sports teams, bathrooms and changing rooms, school balls, camps, and information sharing. For example, transgender students have reported barriers to inclusion, such as access to facilities and recognition of their identity.<sup>71</sup>
159. Youth '12 revealed that trans and gender diverse youth are facing a hard time in school, with over half fearing someone would hurt or bother them at school. Around 40% of surveyed students reported experiencing significant depressive symptoms, and 43.3% had been hit or physically harmed on purpose at school in the last year. One in five reported being bullied at school at least weekly. There has been no improvement in relation to the school bullying that LGBTQIA+ students face since 2001.

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<sup>69</sup> <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/secondary-schools-2015>

<sup>70</sup> Ward, C., Liu, J., Fairbairn-Dunlop, T.P., and A.K Henderson. 2010. *Youth Voices, Youth Choices: Identity, integration and social cohesion on culturally diverse Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research and Va'aomanu Pasifika, Victoria University. Accessed from: <https://www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr/research/youth-family/youth-voices,-youth-choices/Youth-Voices-Youth-Choices-report.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Youth Parliament. 2016. *Inquiry into whether schools be required to be more accessible to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community (for example, in terms of school culture and facilities)*. Accessed from: <http://www.myd.govt.nz/documents/youth-parliament-education-and-science-sc-background-paper.pdf>.

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160. A 2011 survey<sup>72</sup> of LGBTQIA+ community leaders found highly variable experiences of sexuality diverse students in secondary schools. Some receive open, protective support while others received no support. Some schools were reported as failing to meet the minimal guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education. The survey also found that LGBTQIA+ identities are not visible in the classroom and the education system.
161. This survey also sampled school's Board Assurance Statements that are provided to the ERO and outline schools' policies on bullying. It found that a third of schools provided evidence of homophobic bullying.

### ***Students needing linguistic support***

162. New Zealand schools have a role in supporting students who speak languages other than English so that teachers can respond to students' culture, language and identity and support them to learn English.
163. New Zealand born children of migrants may be less likely to be fluent in either their first language or English. For instance, NCEA Level 2 data shows that New Zealand-born students of Pacific migrants do not perform as well as new Pacific migrants who have received their maximum allocation of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) funding<sup>73</sup>. In 2017, students from Pacific ethnic backgrounds made up approximately 30% of all ESOL funded students<sup>74</sup>.
164. Over 13% of 7-year-olds were eligible for ESOL support in 2017. There are more students who need it, but are not eligible (for example, Māori children who went to Kōhanga Reo or speak Māori at home; second generation migrant children who speak a non-English language at home).
165. In Auckland it is not uncommon for 40% of a primary school's roll to need ESOL support. ERO's latest research into how well schools<sup>75</sup> are responding to language diversity in Auckland found that there is an overall need for schools to improve their response to culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and to support their acquisition of the English language.
166. Most schools knew who these students were and had, to some extent, taken steps to respond to their language and culture. However, only 58% of schools intentionally promoted learning by using a home language or cultural lens to support the learners' acquisition of English, and to promote engagement with the learner, their parents and communities.

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<sup>72</sup> Riches, M. 2014. *How Safe are our Schools? An analysis of the current policy framework aimed at protecting queer young people in New Zealand secondary schools*. Green Party, Wellington. Accessed from: <https://home.greens.org.nz/sites/default/files/rainbowreport-20140827.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Migrant children and children of migrants are entitled to different rates/years' worth of ESOL funding.

<sup>74</sup> Briefing Note: Pacific Children's Language Fluency, 28 February 2018, METIS 1109515

<sup>75</sup> ERO's research also included early learning services, but the data has been excluded from this report.

## Student wellbeing

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167. Wellbeing is a concept that describes a positive state of being. It encompasses multiple and overlapping domains. Students with positive wellbeing can be characterised as having safety, security, connectedness, wellness and the skills and knowledge to live good lives and meet their aspirations.
168. This concept of wellbeing reflects a cross- government, comprehensive view of the student as an individual, and in the context of family, whānau, community and society as a whole<sup>76</sup>.
169. *Hauora* is a concept of wellbeing that covers the physical, mental and emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of health. This idea is recognised as one of the underlying concepts of the health and physical education section of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*<sup>77</sup>.

## Wellbeing in schools

170. Schools are important settings for the promotion of student wellbeing and hauora, and are a key access point for both identifying issues, and coordinating support services.
171. When schools implement effective programmes aimed at increasing student wellbeing, research has found improvements in both levels of academic achievement and social and emotional competence, and decreases in anxiety, depression and levels of misbehaviour in the classroom<sup>78</sup>.
172. ERO has developed a series of reports on wellbeing in schools, including school evaluation indicators, to help schools to evaluate their practice. The indicators reflect what we know makes a difference to students' wellbeing and mental health and are available to all schools.
173. ERO's review of wellbeing in secondary schools<sup>79</sup> found 16% of those in the review were well placed to promote and respond to wellbeing and 57% have elements of good practice around promoting and responding to wellbeing. However 26% have major challenges that affected the way they promoted and responded to wellbeing.
174. 48% of the primary schools that ERO included in their wellbeing review reported a reasonable promotion of and response to wellbeing issues, while 20% were more focused on behavioural management.

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<sup>76</sup> Gluckman, P., et al. (2017) *Toward a Whole of Government/Whole of Nation Approach to Mental Health*.

<sup>77</sup> The development of student wellbeing, including mental health, is a fundamental expectation and driving ethos within the Ministry of Education's Curriculum documents. The key competencies within each of the Curriculum documents support the development of wellbeing.<sup>77 77 77</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger. (2011). *The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions*.

<sup>79</sup> Education Review Office. 2015. *Wellbeing for young people's success at secondary schools*.

Accessed from: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/ERO-Wellbeing-SecondSchools-web.pdf>;

Education Review Office. 2015. *Wellbeing for young people's success at primary schools*. Accessed from: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/ERO-Wellbeing-Primary-Schools-WEB.pdf>.

### **There have been some substantial improvements in student wellbeing**

175. The latest NZCER national secondary survey found that in 2015, student behaviour was much less of a major issue for schools than it had been in 2012 when the last survey was done, and in 2009 when Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) School-Wide began. In 2015, 15% of principals and 27% of teachers reported student behaviour as a major concern compared to 26% and 44% in 2012 and 33% and 37% in 2009.
176. Auckland University's *Youth '12* national health and wellbeing survey of students found that some areas of health and wellbeing of secondary students in New Zealand were improving. The results found significant reductions since 2001 in behaviours that are risky and destructive, such as binge drinking and risky driving. It also found small improvements in aspects of school life, with more students reporting that they like school, their teachers are fair, and they feel adults at school care about them.
177. NZCER surveys student wellbeing at school and reports half-yearly on trends. Over 2013 to 2017, these trends included a general upward movement in the number of students who strongly agreed with positive statements about the social climate of their school (for example, I feel I belong at school; everyone knows what to do if someone is being hurt or bullied).
178. The survey also found a large increase in the number of students who strongly agreed they feel safe at school, mostly for Year 7-8 students.
179. PISA 2015 captured information on students' wellbeing, which was reported on by the OECD in 2017.<sup>80</sup> The results support findings from New Zealand surveys, that there are areas where our students feel positive about their school life.
180. PISA 2015 findings showed that the majority of New Zealand's 15-year-old students felt they were liked by other students, made friends easily and felt like they belonged at their school. They also had a strong motivation to achieve academically (higher than the OECD average).
181. Around 90% of students reported their parents are interested in their schooling and support their efforts, and around 80% reported that most of the time their teachers showed an interest in students' learning and gave extra help when it was needed.

### **Wellbeing concerns**

182. The OECD also found areas of longstanding concern. Higher proportions (between 17 and 22 percent) of New Zealand's 15-year-olds reported they felt like an outsider, out of place or lonely at school and reported they experienced more regular bullying than the OECD averages.

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<sup>80</sup> Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 Results (Volume III): Student Well-being; national report. [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/181544/PISA-2015-NZ-Students-Wellbeing-Report.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/181544/PISA-2015-NZ-Students-Wellbeing-Report.pdf)

***Test anxiety is a problem for New Zealand students***

183. Test anxiety and worry about poor grades among New Zealand students was high, particularly for girls.
184. According to PISA, schoolwork-related anxiety and worry about poor grades is high among New Zealand 15-year-old students, particularly for girls, students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and for Māori and Pacific students.<sup>81</sup> 72% of students felt anxious, even when they had prepared for a test. This was 16% higher than the OECD average<sup>82</sup>.
185. Being the victim of bullying can enhance this anxiety. PISA 2015 results show that 82% of New Zealand students who were classified as frequently bullied reported feeling anxious before a test, even if they were well prepared, compared to 70% who were not classified as frequently bullied. This difference is significant even after gender, socio-economic status and overall school performance are taken into account.

***New Zealand has high rates of bullying***

186. Bullying is a serious issue for New Zealand students. It occurs as part of a broad social and environmental context that includes individual, family, community and school factors. Bullying has a negative impact on wellbeing.<sup>83</sup>
187. In a British 50-year longitudinal study<sup>84</sup> it was reported that the effects of bullying were still visible nearly four decades later, with health, social and economic consequences lasting well into adulthood.
188. Youth '12 found that not all students feel safe and supported by the actions of adults in response to bullying in their learning environment. Some students do not feel that schools and kura are responding to bullying. Just over half of frequently bullied students reported that their teacher behaved unfairly, compared to around 25% of all New Zealand students.
189. Positively, the NZCER survey<sup>85</sup> found a downward trend in students reporting weekly experiences of bullying behaviour (from around 16% to 13%). However, it also found that some teachers do not feel that they or their students are effectively supported by policies, practices and professional learning and development (PLD) to deal with aggressive student behaviour.
190. According to PISA 2015<sup>86</sup>, 15-year-olds in New Zealand are reporting the second-highest rate of bullying out of 51 OECD countries. Survey answers

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<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Education. 2015. *PISA 2015: New Zealand Students' Wellbeing Report*. OECD. April 2017. Accessed from: [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/180613/PISA-2015-Summary-Report\\_v2.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/180613/PISA-2015-Summary-Report_v2.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> This data was collected in mid-2015, when students would have been undertaking internal assessment and mock exams for NCEA Level 1. New Zealand is one of the few countries that has national qualifications for this age group.

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Education, Briefing Note: Meeting with David Rutherford of the HRC, 5 February 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Klomek, A.B., Sourander, A. & Elonheimo, H. (2015). Bullying by peers in childhood and effects on psychopathology, suicidality and criminality in adulthood. *Lancet Psychiatry*, 2: 930-941.

<sup>85</sup> NZCER, Wellbeing @ School Survey half-yearly report of trends over 2013 to 2017.

<sup>86</sup> PISA Wellbeing 2015 Survey:

[https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/181544/PISA-2015-NZ-Students-Wellbeing-Report.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/181544/PISA-2015-NZ-Students-Wellbeing-Report.pdf)

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from New Zealand showed just over a quarter of the students taking part reported being subject to some type of bullying at least a few times a month.

191. PISA<sup>87</sup> found that Māori and Pākeha students report higher exposure to bullying than Pacific and Asian students. Lower decile schools have higher proportions of students who report bullying behaviour weekly and lower proportions of those who almost never report these behaviours.
192. PISA has found that New Zealand has a high association between perceptions of teacher unfairness and student reporting of bullying. In schools with higher perceptions of teacher unfairness, 36% of students are classified as frequently bullied, compared to 12% of schools with lower perception of teacher unfairness. This is higher than across the OECD.
193. TIMSS<sup>88</sup> found that New Zealand has the second-highest rate of bullying out of 51 countries. 60% of Year 5 students and 35% of Year 9 students report that they have experienced some form of bullying behaviour monthly or more. More than a quarter of students reported being subject to some type of bullying at least a few times a month.
194. TIMSS also found that low decile schools had a bigger proportion of students than the less disadvantaged schools who experienced bullying behaviours about weekly.
195. While New Zealand male students have a greater sense of belonging than female students, PISA and TIMMS found that boys were more likely to experience bullying.<sup>89</sup>

### **Mental health**

196. Mental health is part of the compulsory school curriculum at both the primary and lower secondary level through the Health and Physical Education learning area in the *New Zealand Curriculum* and Hauora learning area in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, which is compulsory from year 1-10.
197. Mental health has been identified by ERO as a key challenge experienced by students, alongside household poverty, family dysfunction, personal relationships, bullying and drug misuse.<sup>90</sup>
198. Mental illnesses, with symptoms such as depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide, are particular areas of concern for New Zealand.

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<sup>87</sup> Ministry of Education. 2015. *PISA 2015: New Zealand Summary Report*. Accessed from: [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/180613/PISA-2015-Summary-Report\\_v2.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/180613/PISA-2015-Summary-Report_v2.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> Ministry of Education. 2016. *TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study)*. Accessed from: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/research/timss>

<sup>89</sup> Ministry of Education. 2017. *PISA 2015: New Zealand Students Wellbeing*. Accessed from: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/181544/PISA-2015-NZ-Students-Wellbeing-Report.pdf](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/181544/PISA-2015-NZ-Students-Wellbeing-Report.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> Education Review Office. (2013). *Improving Guidelines and Counselling for Students in Secondary School*, 13.

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199. The *Youth '12* survey found that many indicators of mental wellbeing remain stubbornly poor and compare badly with international reporting using similar metrics<sup>91</sup>.
200. The *Youth '12* indicators illustrate significant and persistent disparities for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (predominantly Māori and Pacific students):
  - Rates of self-harm among Māori and Pacific populations remained high at 26.5% and 28.7%
  - 21.9% of Māori and 25% of Pacific young people reported they had not been able to access health or dental care when needed
  - Rates of binge drinking remained high for Māori youth (32.4%)
201. The mental wellbeing of students appears to have deteriorated slightly between 2007 and 2012<sup>92</sup>, with small increases in the proportions of students reporting significant depressive symptoms (12.8% up from 9.5%), deliberate self-harming (24.0% up from 19.4%), and suicidal ideation (15.7% up from 13.1%).
202. The 2017 UNICEF report card, which assessed 41 high income countries against nine of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, gave New Zealand an overall league table ranking of 34<sup>th</sup> out of 41. New Zealand ranked 38<sup>th</sup> for 'good health and wellbeing'. The report identified New Zealand as having the highest suicide rate of adolescents aged 15-19 years.<sup>93</sup>

### ***New Zealand has high rates of childhood obesity***

203. New Zealand has high rates of childhood obesity<sup>94</sup>. Childhood obesity can have a negative impact on children's learning and academic achievement. Obese children are at risk of immediate and long-term health consequences, including poor self-esteem and depression.
204. The New Zealand Health Survey 2016/17 found that 12% of children aged two to fourteen were obese and a further 21% were overweight but not obese. 18% of Māori children were obese, 29% of Pacific children were obese. 20% of children living in deprived neighbourhoods were obese and the child obesity rate increased from 8% in 2006/07 to 12% in 2016/17.

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<sup>91</sup> Clark, T. C., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., Denny, S., Crengle, S., Dyson, B., Fortune, S., Lucassen, M., Peiris-John, R., Robinson, E., Rossen, F., Sheridan, J., Teevale, T., Utter, J. (2013). *Youth '12 Overview: The health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students in 2012*. Auckland, New Zealand: The University of Auckland

<sup>92</sup> Fleming, T., Clark, T., Denny, S., Bullen, P., Crengle, S., Peiris-John, R., Robinson, E., Rossen, F., Sheridan, J., Lucassen, M. (2013). *Stability and change in the mental health of New Zealand secondary school students 2007–2012: Results from the national adolescent health surveys*. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.

<sup>93</sup> Unicef New Zealand. 2017. Innocenti Report Card- New Zealand. Accessed from: <https://www.unicef.org.nz/learn/advocacy/global-report-card>.

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data-sets/obesity-statistics>